

What Will the Census Ask You?

Demography

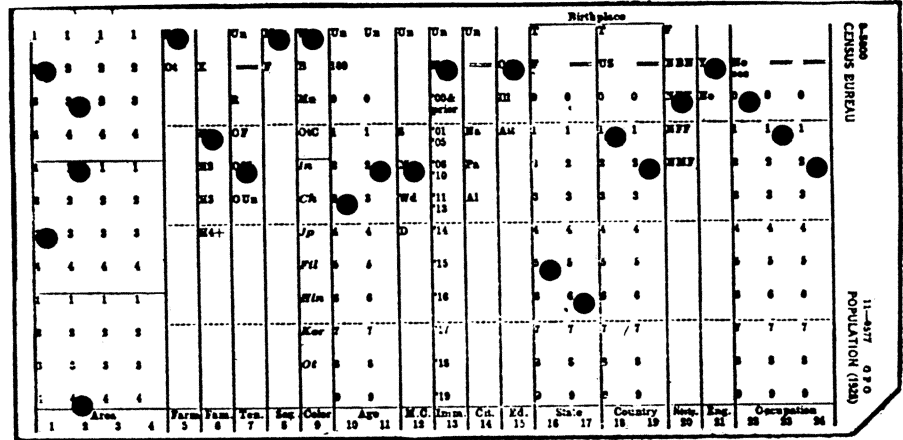
By FLORA G. ORR

How old are you? Don't get angry with the poor man (or woman) who rings your doorbell soon after April 1, 1930, and who'll come in and sit on a stiff chair in your parlor and ask you all kinds of personal questions.

The much-abused census-taker can't help being inquisitive. The United States government has ordered him to ask you all about yourself and your family. Furthermore, the law reads that you must answer him correctly to the best of your ability, or be guilty of a misdemeanor against your Uncle Sam.

But you don't need to worry. The information you give the census-taker is strictly in confidence. After it gets to Washington you are given a number, that number is entered on a card, and the card is punched to indicate the information which you gave, and that card is used by the Census Bureau in compiling various masses of statistics, but the sheet containing your name goes into a file, to which nobody but the Census Bureau has access—not even another government bureau or department, such as the Treasury Department. On, some fifty years later, to be sure, the files are made available as public records, but fifty years is a long time—more than some lifetimes.

The census taker who comes to your house is just one of a field force of 100,000 doorbell ringers, who will have to hurry around and get the 1930



WHEN YOUR ANSWERS get to Washington they are transferred in code to punch cards similar to this one. Each individual has his own numbered card which ingenious machines count.

census in the districts assigned to them, and hurry the results in to Uncle Sam before the first of May, 1930.

It is believed, on the basis of estimates of average periodic increases in population, that the present census will list anywhere between 123,000,000 and 125,000,000 persons. There is an electric device on display at the Bureau of the Census which shows that in 1926 in the United States there was an average of:

- One birth every 12 seconds.
- One death every 24 seconds.
- One immigrant every 1¾ minutes.
- One emigrant every 5¾ minutes.
- Net gain, one person every 20 seconds.

Today the Census Bureau says the pace has slowed up a bit, and our net gain now is one person every 23 seconds.

The last census, taken in 1910, showed that the United States, exclusive of possessions, had a population of 105,000,000. Figure it out for yourself. There have been many twenty-three second spaces of time since 1910.

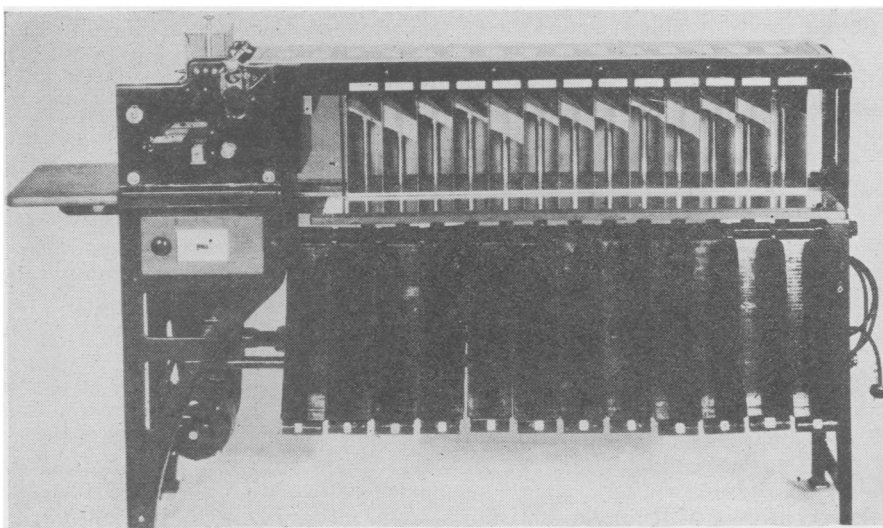
One hundred thousand enumerators out fishing with their nets of questions to ask you. What will the Census Bureau in Washington be doing to get ready for handling all the answers?

For one thing, the Census Bureau will be augmenting its force of clerks. About 5,400 to 7,500 extra population for Washington, D. C., may be in sight for the next one to three years. The clerical force at the Census Bureau must be increased from 600 to 6000 or 8000. Many of these temporary clerks, however, will be drawn from the present population of the District of Columbia.

The punch cards are being prepared, on which all the information about a resident of the United States is coded, and put in the card index system.

For the last census that meant 300,000,000 cards. To correlate facts thus transmitted to the cards, these cards then had to be run through the electrical tabulating machines, several times, so that it amounted to running two and one-half billion cards through the tabulating machines.

The regular questions to be asked this year about (Turn to next page)



ALMOST HUMAN INTELLIGENCE enables this machine not only to count the code cards at the rate of 100,000 in seven hours, but to sort them at the same time into 11 different groups, depending on their code perforation.

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each person are as follows: His or her relationship to head of family; home owned or rented; if owned, free or mortgaged; does family live on a farm; sex; color or race; age at last birthday; single, married, widowed, or divorced; attended school any time since September 1, 1929; able to read and write; place of birth of person being enumerated, also place of birth of that person's father and mother; if not native of United States, year of immigration, naturalized or alien; does person being enumerated speak English; occupation, industry or business in which engaged; veteran of U. S. military or naval forces in any war or expedition, and if so, what war or expedition. The last question is a new one, added to the schedule this year by the Census Bureau.

By direct order of Congress, a census of unemployment is to be made, therefore enumerators have special instructions with regard to the occupation listing.

The Director of the Census, W. M. Steuart, states that it will be difficult to make the unemployment census absolutely accurate. There are many old persons, and some who are invalided, who would like to return to work, he states, but who should not be listed as having occupations and temporarily out of work. No occupation should be given for persons in this condition, he declares, no matter whether they are living off their own incomes or being supported by others. On the other hand, someone who is able to work and who has a trade or occupation normally may not be working when the census enumerator calls, and when he hears the question, "occupation", he may inadvertently answer "None", regardless of the fact that he usually has one, or is capable of having one if opportunity presents itself. It is exactly such persons as the latter type which the unemployment census should enumerate, therefore census-takers are being very carefully instructed to get the correct answers to this question.

But there are additional puzzlers for the pencil-pushing question boxes relative to this unemployment census. Here will be a married woman who works occasionally, or a man or a woman who is not particularly ambitious or under the necessity of working all the time, but who does take a job once in a while. How should the census enumerate these persons, if the enumerator finds them not on any job when he comes around?

If the census enumerator asked all the questions which it has been suggested from time to time would be desirable from an informational viewpoint, he would be around your home much longer than the space of the short visit which he will now pay you. In fact, you might have to ask him to have at least one meal with the family, if he had to take the time to gather all the sociological data desired in some quarters and which would undoubtedly be valuable if it could be obtained in this way.

The number of radio sets in the United States, the number of men and women over 65 years of age who possess less than \$5000, religious affiliations, incomes, value of properties personally owned, racial descents, responses to literacy tests, number of rooms occupied by each family, extent of schooling, number of children per mother, ability of citizens to read English with understanding—are a few of the suggestions.

However, it is at present the aim of the Census Bureau to keep the schedule as simple and as compact as possible, and for the present at least, not to try to expend too much in connection with the population census.

"We are holding down the scope of the inquiry," states Dr. Joseph A. Hill, assistant director of the Census Bureau, "for two reasons. First, we are already collecting about as much information as we are able properly to tabulate and use at the present time, with the facilities at our command. Second, we constantly conduct other censuses by correspondence with various state and county agencies, and we are continually making special censuses with our regular permanent field staff of enumerators. We made a complete census of religious bodies in the United States in 1926, results of which have just recently been tabulated. Every two years we make a census of manufactures, including a canvass of factories or plants. We keep up to date our figures regarding the output of the previous year, the number of employees in each industry, aggregate sum paid out in wages, cost of material consumed, and horsepower used. In the current census of manufactures, there are interesting figures for that newest of industries—the production of aircraft.

"We continuously compile statistics of births and deaths, getting our data from state or local health offices. All but four states are now included in the birth-registration area. Inclusion

in this area means that a state has a birth registration law conforming to one drafted by the Bureau of the Census, the American Medical Association, and the American Public Health Association."

Financial statistics of states and cities are either obtained by correspondence or by special agents who spend anywhere from 6 to 100 days on the ground, going over records and reports and consulting officials. Statistics on marriage and divorce are compiled each year, from reports sent in by county and state officials.

It is undoubtedly true that in future years some method will be found whereby the Census Bureau's statistical work will expand to furnish the answers to questions constantly being asked in connection with immigration, law enforcement, public health, and a score of other subjects on which definite information is lacking. Whether such censuses will be undertaken directly in connection with the enumeration of the population it is impossible to state at this time.

There have been attempts in the past to have the population enumerators get crime statistics. This was one of the duties of the census-takers in 1890. They got their information from county and district courthouses. In 1880 questions on individual health were part of the schedule. Long ago, it was part of the enumerator's duties to furnish the names of all the deaf, dumb, and blind. Even today, each enumerator carries some special blanks on which he is to write the names of deaf-mutes and blind persons, and these persons are later sent special blanks to be filled out by themselves or their families. Most public health statistics are today collected by the Bureau of Public Health rather than by the Census Bureau.

From time to time, framers of immigration laws have thought that information could be collected along with each decennial census which would help in making up immigration laws. One suggested inquiry along this line was that each person should be asked the nationality of his parents. Another question suggested was: "What was your mother's maiden name?" But patent difficulties lie in the way of obtaining any exact information about racial descent from the answers to be made to these questions.

"Nationality" is a broad term. A native of Alsace-Lorraine might be either German or (*Turn to next page*)

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French. A Canadian may be Scotch-Irish, English, French-English, or any one of a number of other bloods or combinations of bloods. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have no idea at all what their mother's maiden names were. Furthermore, knowing the names of parents gives but inaccurate information as to racial descent, as it is a common practice in this country to corrupt and change family names. A person who is one-eighth negro blood may have had parents both of whose names were pure English in sound and spelling.

The "mother tongue" question asked in former population censuses relative to parents also did not work out to give any very valuable statistical information.

The Director of the Census has finally decided that if it can be learned in what country each of the parents of an individual was born, that is as much detail as we can ever expect to get with regard to racial descent.

An agricultural census is taken every two years, therefore the present one will be taken along with the regular census. In the Bureau of the Census, 15 or 20 punch cards will be required to carry the data for each farm. About 100,000,000 cards are being prepared for the agricultural census alone. In the agricultural census of 1925, 6,371,640 farms were enumerated.

Business demands will have their way this year, in that a complete census of distribution, and the way Americans spend their money for commodities is to be made. Such a study was made in 1926 in a few large cities. Complete inventories of retail establishments, volume of retail sales by all kinds of businesses, sales per capital, number of inhabitants per store, employes in retail distribution, their salaries and the relation of their salaries to sales—and the same subjects of inquiry relative to the wholesale establishments are to be made. Excepting in country districts, this census will not be made by the population enumerators, but by special enumerators appointed by the Census Bureau. Though American business is legitimately curious as to an analysis of where and how citizens of the United States spend the eighty billion dollars they are said to use every year for the purchase of commodities, nevertheless, Director Steuart foresees difficulties. In a recent statement he declared:

"Furniture made by a Grand

Rapids manufacturing plant may be sold through a wholesale mart in Chicago and move to its user without touching that city. Copper mined in Arizona may move through San Francisco to delivery to a new owner at Baltimore, while the sale is actually made in a New York office. Where shall we say the business transpired? Transaction on the Chicago Board of Trade may touch the disposition of wheat that never moves out of Minneapolis. Duplications in this census are going to be hard to avoid, and the production of worthwhile statistics on distribution is going to be a hard task."

The first census of the United States was little more than a count of the number of inhabitants in 1790. It was undertaken largely for the purpose of determining congressional representation, and the distribution of taxes. United States marshals were the census supervisors.

The name of the head of each family was written down in a record book supplied by the marshal himself, and opposite the name he wrote the number of free white males in the family under 16 years of age, and those over 16 years of age, also the number of free white females in that family, the number of free colored persons in the household, and lastly the number of slaves.

These columns were added up by hand and the totals were sent to the office of the Secretary of State in Philadelphia, where the hand-adding was continued, in order to get the totals for each political division and for the whole United States.

By 1800 more details of ages and sex were included; and in 1840 the government printed the schedules to be used, and asked for still further details of ages of males, females, and free colored inhabitants. The number of persons in each family employed in the various trades was requested; the headings of the trades listed were mining, agriculture, commerce, manufacturing and trading; navigation of the ocean; navigation of lakes, canals and rivers; the learned professions and engineering. The number of pensioners on account of military service in each family was asked, also the ages of such pensioners; and the number of deaf, dumb, blind and insane. By 1850, each free person, black or white, male or female—had a whole line to himself or herself in the census schedule, and the occupation of each male over

15 was given.

More tabulation than ever before is to be undertaken by the Census Bureau in connection with the 1930 census. There will be more detailed tables as to ages. These will be listed by 5's up to the age of 25, and by 10's from 25 up to 75 years of age. More details as to marital status of residents of the United States will be tabulated.

Are you one who will have no difficulty answering the question: How old are you? It would be interesting to know how many persons out of the approximate 125,000,000 about whom statistics are to be gathered, do not themselves know exactly how old they are. A great many persons, it is evident, says Leon E. Truesdell, chief statistician for population in the Census Bureau, are uncertain on this point, and have no way of getting any correct information about it. The statistics on age as they come in this time are expected to show, as always, he says, that there is a tendency for men and women to approximate their ages, so that there is a strong concentration on the even numbers such as 32, 36, 42, etc., rather than much mention of such ages as 31, 37, 39 or 41, and a still greater approximation and concentration on the "fives" and the "tens". Men of 37 or 38 years are apt to say they are 35 or 40, respectively. Women of 27, 28 and 29 tend to approximate themselves as "around 25".

Something to astonish the world has been the growth of the population of the United States since 1790! It will be in 1930 more than 30 times as great as in 1790, and nearly twice what it was in 1890.

If the present rate of increase should go on indefinitely, statisticians estimate that in 1970 there would be 200,000,000 persons in continental United States. However, the present rate of growth is not expected to continue indefinitely. The birth rate is declining. Immigration is being held down, and further restrictions may be imposed in future years.

Nevertheless, 130,000,000 or even 140,000,000 is no idle mark to shoot at. We will get there all right, and probably sooner than we think. It is believed that by 1950, with all factors taken into consideration, we may actually have a population of 150,000,000. And 187,000,000 by the year 2000 is foreseen.