



THEY ARE COUNTED, TOO

This is a scene at the dress rehearsal census already completed in Indiana. America's trailer population creates a new task for the census takers.

whole battery of inquiries; in 1930, the number of questions was up to 30.

Overloading the schedule of questions is regarded by the government bureau as a real danger. Every item added, or left out, in revising the questionnaire is carefully judged. Many people urge the Census Bureau to include information they consider valuable. The Bureau has been asked to count dogs, fence posts, blonds and brunettes, and nursing mothers. None of these can be counted in 1940. Questions are chosen as having greatest usefulness for social and economic problems.

Handling the data that come piling into the Bureau when the harvest of questions is over, is a gigantic statistical project. The Census Bureau is proud owner of the largest battery of unit tabu-

lating equipment possessed by any organization. One of its own employees invented the first machine to tabulate the census of 1890. The system of punching cards, so that they can be sorted according to the holes for tabulating and automatic totalling, is a triumph of machine work.

The Bureau likes to remind you that this machine work on the cards of the 1930 census was the equivalent of handling over 4,700,000,000 cards once.

Maybe that gives you an idea why the Bureau is so busy getting ready for the next, even bigger card crop, and also why it thinks twice and confers with government and business advisers before it decides to ask one more question.

Science News Letter, December 2, 1939

MEDICINE

Pituitary Gland Failure Held To Be Cause of Sprue

A NEW theory of the cause of sprue, a serious disease of the tropics which also occurs in the United States and other temperate regions, was announced by Dr. Edward B. Vedder, of George Washington Medical School, at the meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine in Memphis.

Sprue, Dr. Vedder believes, is caused by a failure of the tiny but powerful pituitary gland at the base of the brain. This little gland produces a number of hormones, among them one called prolactin which stimulates milk secretion, and which also has an effect on the digestive tract. It is lack of this hormone

● RADIO

Dr. Dean R. Brimhall, assistant to the chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Authority, will describe the research on training of America's flyers of tomorrow as guest scientist on "Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the coast to coast network of the Columbia Broadcasting System, Monday, December 11, 3:35 p.m., EST, 2:35 CST, 1:35 MST, 12:35 PST. Listen in on your local station. Listen in each Monday.

which Dr. Vedder believes causes sprue, and he would like physicians to try the hormone as a remedy for their sprue patients.

Most effective remedies for sprue at present are liver extract or some other source of the vitamin B₂ complex, but Dr. Vedder believes the gland hormone would prove a better remedy.

Sore mouth, anemia and digestive disorder are characteristic symptoms of sprue. The digestive disorders set up a vicious cycle, because the sprue patient already unable to absorb enough of the B vitamins, has more and more trouble getting enough of these vitamins which he needs to remedy his illness. In severe cases they must be given by hypodermic injections. A number of scientists have concluded that the digestive disorder and vitamin deficiency were important parts of the picture, but no satisfactory explanation for what starts the vicious cycle has hitherto been forthcoming.

The start of the digestive disorder, Dr. Vedder believes, is the failure of the anterior pituitary gland to produce enough prolactin to keep the digestive tract functioning smoothly. Tropical service, he suggests, precipitates the pituitary gland failure in some persons, but such gland failure may occur without the precipitating effect of long periods of tropical heat, which may explain the nearly 200 cases of non-tropical sprue in medical records.

Science News Letter, December 2, 1939

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