

PROPOSAL FOR CONTINUOUS, ALPHABETICALLY STAGGERED CENSUS

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Technical Abstract

Each inhabitant is given, based on initial letters of surname, one of 3650 reporting dates for every decade. (If surname is changed, and new report scheduled $x \pm 10 \pm \epsilon$ years after last report, person is counted as $x/10$ people. If $x > 10 \pm \epsilon$, next report is made 10 years later instead.) Ethnic stratification, rather than strict alphabetical ordering, is utilized to minimize effect of immigration and internal growth differentials on population estimates. Temporary exactness (twenty months late), the quaint pseudo-virtue of one-day head-counts, is sacrificed in favor of long-term precision and speedier results at less cost, since special hires are eliminated and peak postal load is reduced. Legislative reapportionment will be more timely, rather than up to twelve years late from present technique. New follow-up methods must evolve to supplement address register, but reporting percentage should increase from improved public consciousness of daily census activities.

History

Phase I: Generation

Late 1967 or early 1968: Author conceives apparently original idea of staggering census according to letters of last name. Idea utilized in a draft of a proposed new constitution which achieves no more than a limited private circulation. (At this stage the problems of name changes and ethnic differentials are unappreciated. To see that the former is a problem, imagine a Perpetually Remarrying Woman. This PRW remarries every 3651 days in such a way as to report only once in her lifetime, unless special rules are devised to ensure reporting at least once every $10 \pm \epsilon$ years. As for ethnicity, if the names were simply taken in alphabetic order, then there would be long stretches from a single ethnic group, such as "Mc" names, leading to bias in population estimates. Thus groups of this nature have to be spread throughout each decade.) Author can't believe that idea which seems so simple and so obviously right could possibly be original, so no particular effort is made to push what is thought of as a minor procedural revision.

1969: Major New York publishers reject manuscript. Author retreats imperceptibly from megalomania.

Phase II: Appeal to Ad Hoc Power

14 November 1970: Having read of the appointment of the President's Commission on Federal Statistics, the author finds that one of the members is located in New

York City. Author writes letter to Solomon Fabricant to broach subject of alphabetically staggered census.

16 November 1970: Dr. Fabricant responds to author that letter is being forwarded to Daniel B. Rathbun, Executive Director of Commission.

19 November 1970: Dr. Rathbun responds to author, saying that copy of letter is being sent to Joseph F. Daly, Associate Director for Research and Development, Bureau of the Census.

24 November 1970: Dr. Daly responds to author, rejecting procedure.

Date unknown: Author writes to Dr. Daly and/or Dr. Rathbun to answer objections. (No copy kept by author.)

13 April 1971: Author writes reminder to Dr. Rathbun.

16 April 1971: Dr. Rathbun responds to author, restating objections raised by Dr. Daly.

22 April 1971: Author sends Dr. Rathbun a two-page preliminary feasibility study. (Ethnicity now appreciated.)

4 May 1971: Dr. Rathbun responds to author again rejecting proposal, quoting new rejection from Dr. Daly. Only now does author begin to comprehend that crux of negative opinion is lack of foolproof follow-up analogous to address register for present one-day head-count method.

8 May 1971: Author responds to Dr. Rathbun (copy to Dr. Daly), giving alternate follow-up procedures for proposed method, such as telephone directories, etc.

21 May 1971: Dr. Rathbun writes author that proposal will be "made available to all Commission members...along with other methods of improving the census".

18 June 1971: Dr. Rathbun writes author to suggest "a detailed proposal aimed at, say, Congress".

1 July 1971: Author writes Dr. Rathbun to inquire about Commission support for such a proposal.

12 July 1971: Dr. Rathbun writes author that "all available resources have been committed", but no reply yet on "Census resources".

Phase III: Appeal to Permanent Power in Government

1 September 1971: Author writes to the Chairmen of Senate Commerce and House Government Operations Committees to inquire as to how to approach Congress.

3 September 1971: M. Q. Romney, Associate General Counsel, House Government

Operations Committee, responds to author, giving correct committees in House and Senate with "legislative jurisdiction over the Census".

24 September 1971: Author writes to the Honorable Thaddeus J. Dulski, Chairman of House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, inquiring how to make proposal. Also to Honorable Gale W. McGee, Chairman of Senate Committee on Post Office and Civil Service.

29 September 1971: Sen. McGee responds to author, and "would be happy to consider an outline" of proposal.

30 September 1971: Rep. Dulski responds to author, enclosing Congressional Record for 14 June 1971 ("Administration Withdraws Its Support for a Mid-decade Census") and for 22 September 1971 ("Mid-decade Census Proposal Is Still Under Active Consideration"). He explains how his "staff has done some research on" the proposal, is "informed" about previous replies from the government, and is somewhat negative. He mentions "hearings on a mid-decade census program earlier this year" held by the Honorable Charles H. Wilson, Chairman, Subcommittee on Census and Statistics, and mentions subcommittee commitment to "this legislation a matter of top priority". He does "not expect to schedule...any further hearings during" Ninety-second Congress which "would encompass" author's proposal.

6 October 1971: Author writes to Rep. Dulski, answering objections, opposing mid-decade census as "a halfway measure to meet the goal of updated population estimates", and offering to appear before Committee.

6 October 1971: Author writes to Sen. McGee outlining proposal.

12 October 1971: Rep. Dulski responds to author, indicating that letter of 6 Oct. has been referred to Rep. Wilson.

14 October 1971: Sen. McGee acknowledges receipt of outline from author, saying it will be studied.

14 October 1971: Sen. McGee sends above correspondence to Dr. George Hay Brown, Director, Bureau of the Census.

21 October 1971: Dr. Brown writes Sen. McGee explaining why Bureau "cannot endorse" proposal. Alternative to address register now is clearly the central problem.

26 October 1971: Sen. McGee, enclosing letter from Dr. Brown, writes author to reject proposal.

1 November 1971: Author writes slightly

snide letter to Sen. McGee (copy to Dr. Brown) answering objections.

9 November 1971: Author writes to Prof. Charles B. Nam, asking to present paper on proposal to Montreal meeting of ASA in August 1972.

9 December 1971: Author writes reminder to Sen. McGee.

16 March 1972: Author reads that Dr. Brown will be in New York City on 4 April and 13 April, and writes him asking for a meeting.

23 March 1972: Author writes strong letter to Rep. Wilson asking that certain research monies be withheld from the Bureau of the Census "until Dr. Brown digs a bit deeper into the idea of a continuous census".

27 March 1972: Dr. Brown responds to author, arranging telephone conversation on 4 April.

4 April 1972: Dr. Brown speaks with the author for about 45 minutes. Author agrees to inquire about constitutionality of proposal, and Dr. Brown agrees to send results of informal preliminary studies indicating that, without an address register follow-up, as much as 7% of population may be missed.

4 April 1972: Author writes to Attorney General asking for opinion on constitutionality (copy to Dr. Brown).

Phase IV: Appeal to Permanent Power in Profession

21 April 1972: Author writes Dr. Nancy R. Mann, a member of ASA Census Advisory Committee (and former associate), to ask for opinion.

15 May 1972: Dr. Mann responds to author offering to "inquire further at the next advisory comm. meeting in September", and mentioning conversation with Dr. Brown in which he indicated "a problem about redefining census tracts".

20 May 1972: Author writes Prof. Leslie Kish, Chairman of ASA Census Advisory Committee, asking if committee members would consider Montreal paper so that an "informed discussion" could take place at committee meeting in September.

22 May 1972: Prof. Kish's secretary replies to author, stating that he will be in Yugoslavia until 11 June.

5 July 1972: An Assistant Attorney General responds to author, stating that legal opinions can only be furnished to "the President and heads of the executive departments".

11 July 1972: Author writes Dr. Brown

about above response and asks him (or a representative) to attend presentation in Montreal.

16 August 1972: Author presents paper at Montreal meeting, conjectures that continual reapportionment entailed in this system would tend to take redistricting procedure out of political arena and into professional hands. Session is poorly attended (Tukey is major competition). In informal discussion after session, birthdays and Social Security Numbers are rejected as basis for continuous census, since only last name is held in common by entire family units.

5 September 1972: Prof. Kish mails form to author indicating he will be in Europe until about 30 June 1973.

Status of Project (22 September 1972)

None of the four individuals (Sen. McGee, Rep. Wilson, Dr. Brown, or Prof. Kish) with political or professional power to push such a proposal is interested in doing so.

The author has seen no report to substantiate the claim of a significant percentage of omissions due to follow-up difficulty.