

Money, politics—high stakes in this numbers game

By TOM LONERGAN

"What it should be is, it shouldn't miss anyone. On the other hand, that's not realistic."

That's basically what the U.S. Census Bureau grapples with every 10 years when it counts the common folk, said bureau director Vincent Barabba.

Barabba, first appointed census chief by Richard Nixon in 1973, was in the Detroit area recently to hobnob with local government officials and the media about the 20th U.S. head count since 1790.

THE NUMBERS will not only determine if one of Michigan's 19 congressmen will be looking for a new job next year, but they are also a factor in the distribution of nearly \$50 billion in federal taxes to state and local governments.

The vast majority of people are expected to mail back completed census forms in April. The 20 percent or so who don't will be visited by a census worker. In 1970, two-thirds of the country received census forms in the mail. This year, the bureau plans to reach 80 to 90 percent by mail.

The mailed census is preferred because it "improves the quality of the count," Barabba said at a press conference last week. It's also "more secure from a privacy point of view," he added.

TO REACH travelers and those who call "home" any place they can find it, the census bureau says its workers will visit "missions, flophouses, train and bus stations, all-night movies and live shows and city or county jails."

Does that include porno houses?

"Oh, yeah," said Gerry Feder of the census bureau's Detroit office.

"They don't go in and watch the movies. And they're not going to go in and interrupt what people are doing. Lord knows."

"Some very carefully trained and very gutsy enumerators (interviewers) will be doing the casual count."

The "casual count," as the census bureau calls it, includes pool halls, employment offices, food stamp and welfare centers. Census workers will count "floaters," as Ms. Feder called them, on April 8 and May 6.

On April 1, those staying at hotels, motels, campgrounds, tourist homes and other temporary residences will find census packets attached to their doors, vehicles or tents.

BARABBA SAID a U.S. population of 222 million is now expected result of the 1980 census.

But he added a disproportionate number of minorities were missed in 1970. The census bureau's final 1970 population count of 204 million nationwide missed 2.3 percent of the population, the director said, including 7.7 percent of all blacks nationwide and an equal proportion of Hispanic Americans.

For low-income areas, missed persons usually lead to less federal tax money for social services.

"ON THOSE areas that have the greatest social

need, we're not going to get a complete count. History has taught us that lesson," said Oakland County Commissioner Dennis Aaron, D-Oak Park.

At the county board's general government committee meeting last week, Aaron demanded the county assure such low-income areas as Pontiac and Royal Oak Township be given special attention in the census count. Royal Oak Township is in Aaron's district.

"Go out and get those people," Aaron told assistant county planner Gordon Lambert.

"I don't care what you have to do to get them. Don't send me. Don't send the Birmingham matrons. Send Mr. Superfly if that's what you have to do to get the people to the workers."

The district census office for Royal Oak Township is in Birmingham.

While Oakland County has not organized a "complete county committee" to publicize the importance of the census, 11 communities have done so, including Bloomfield Township, Lathrup Village and Southfield.

CENSUS '80

APRIL 1

Dems play favorites for census jobs

Hundreds of temporary census jobs are available in south Oakland and western Wayne counties.

You don't necessarily have to be a Democrat to get one, but it helps.

"If someone comes in here, I don't ask if they're a Democrat or Republican," said Marianne Goedert, employment supervisor for the census district office in Birmingham, which covers south Oakland County.

But, she added, a person does have an advantage if "referred by a source"—a Democratic elected official or the county Democratic party.

EVERY APPLICANT for the \$4 an hour interviewer and other jobs must pass a test, a new requirement of the U.S. Census Bureau.

"In the past, it has been strictly patronage," said Clare Kabel, district manager of the northwest Detroit office which covers Redford Township, Livonia, the Plymouth area and part of Westland.

"This is the first year you must take a test," she said.

"Yes, we're soliciting names from Democratic officials, but most of our candidates are John O. Citizens taking the test. They must pass or they don't get the job."

The district manager for the Dearborn census office covering

Garden City, Wayne, Canton Township and part of Westland was equally emphatic that the test was key to being hired.

"Everybody has to qualify by taking the test," said Elaine Gregory. "I don't care who they are. I had to take a test."

ACCORDING TO Ms. Kabel, the 54-question test covers arithmetic, reading, map reading and ability to fill out computer forms.

Other qualifications for census jobs include being from the district he or she is working in and being willing to work a familiar neighborhood.

The district managers for western Wayne County said interviewers are needed in Garden City, Westland, Wayne, Plymouth and Canton. Ms. Gregory said people will be placed as close as possible to their neighborhoods.

"It's less mileage (at 18.5 cents a mile) for the government and good for people who want to work in the area," she said. "Retirees are grand candidates for these jobs," Ms. Kabel added.

Unemployed workers will be hired but can only earn half of their weekly unemployment compensation benefits.

Length of jobs will likely vary from a few weeks to a few months, depending on the work load. "People think they'll be

hired from the end of February to the end of June," said Ms. Kabel. "It does not operate that way."

BESIDES INTERVIEWERS, which the census bureau calls "enumerators," office clerks and crew leaders will be hired. Clerks make \$3.55 an hour; crew leaders, \$4.50 an hour.

The interviewers go door to door to reach those people who haven't mailed back their census forms. The forms will be mailed March 28. The census bureau wants them mailed back on April 1.

The Birmingham office will hire between 400 and 500 people from south Oakland County. The Dearborn office will need 850 employees and the northwest Detroit office 630.

Although the bulk of census workers won't be hired until next month, the three district managers encourage early applicants.

THE OFFICE ADDRESSES:

- Birmingham: 234 Hunter, 48011 (zip), 645-6156 (phone).
- Dearborn — for Garden City, Wayne, Canton and Westland, south of Cherry Hill — 15901 Commerce Drive N., 48126 (zip), 335-4770 (phone).
- Northwest Detroit — for Redford, Livonia, the Plymouth area and Westland, north of Cherry Hill — 25025 Grand River, Detroit, 48240, 255-6388 (phone).

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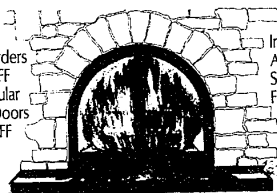
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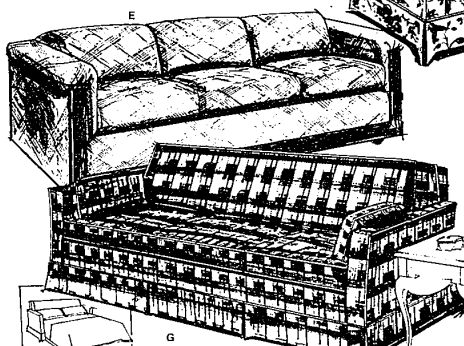
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