

WASHINGTON SCENE

Farm Census Is Really Tough!

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IF SOME of you city folks think the Government is being too nose-y with its 1950 census you should be relieved you don't live on the farm. The Government is prying into every secret of American farm life except how many traveling salesmen were put up overnight last year.

It is sticking a twitching nose into things the farmer used to think were strictly between himself and his mortgage. It wants to know how many acres of woodland he didn't pasture last year and to what extent he is beholden to his relatives.

I have just spent an exhausting two hours skimming through the agriculture questionnaire for Maryland and the District of Columbia. I think if I had to answer the 334 questions contained therein I would go back of the barn and throw myself on an old scythe.

There is some variation to these rural questionnaires from state to state, but they follow a general pattern.

For instance, farmers in the District of Columbia are not asked how many coconuts they shook from their trees in 1949 or whether in their opinion the Princess Papuli has plenty papaya.

But our honest soilers of the till are asking searching questions like: "Is this a farm?"

Our privacy-loving D. C. rustics are also asked:

"Do you rent any of this land from your own or your wife's parent, grandparent, brother or sister?"

I don't know how you might feel, but with me this would be a sore spot. All the little woman's relatives put together never owned enough land to dirty their fingernails.

The questionnaire demands to know how much the farmers of Maryland and D. C. grew in the way of cowpeas and how many cowpeas were harvested for dry peas; how many were cut for hay and how many were "hogged, grazed, or cut for silage." I never dreamed a cowpea could be so complex.

The farmer must also be a clairvoyant as well as a triple bookkeeping system to comply with the law. He's got to foretell how many chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons, etc., there WILL be on his farm this year.

If you ask me, this borders pretty closely on the indelicate. But we will not pursue the thought further.

Not content with the above, however, the Census Bureau demands to know if he had any boarders last year and whether they paid their way. I went through the fine print with par-

ticular care at this point but found nothing worth repeating in a Pullman smoker.

Our farmers have got to keep right up to the minute on their statistics because they are asked:

"How many cows and heifers were milked yesterday?"

Also: "About how many hours last week did you (the person in charge of this place) do farm work or chores on this place? How many other members of your family worked on this place 15 hours or more during last week at farm work or chores without receiving cash wages?"
Whew!!!

Old Harold Ickes, the former Secretary of the Interior, has a farm out in nearby Olney, Md. I sort of wish I were a rural census taker so I could bust in on old McBurp and ask him question No. 273!

"What was the value of mohair clipped; and what was the value of goats and kids, goat milk, rabbits (dressed or alive), fur animals and pelts sold in 1949?"

On the other hand I would refrain, out of a sense of delicacy, from asking the question of our distinguished Secretary of Agriculture.

It would not be cricket to ask: "Have you got mohair?" of Baldy Brannan.