

CENSUS DEBATE IS NOTHING NEW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, the folks at the Census Bureau must be getting a pretty thick skin. This is certainly not the first time they have been criticized. Guess who lodged the first complaint about an undercount? George Washington. He complained to Thomas Jefferson, who was the Marti Ritchie of the 1790s, that the numbers were too low. Washington knew that even back in 1790 when there were only about 3.9 million people living in the colonies, that there was no way to accurately count each American by simply going door to door.

The Census has been surrounded by controversy ever since. In 1920, the party in power was so dismayed by the Census numbers, they simply dismissed them. For the first time, the Census showed that urban areas held a greater proportion of the population than did rural areas. The shift was so devastating to the majority, that Congress just failed to act, claiming that these numbers could not possibly be right. The 1930 Census affirmed the shift and Congress was forced to act.

In 1940, the impact of the undercount simply could not be denied. The War Department was depending on the Census to determine the number of young men eligible to serve. Turns out there were many more men ready to defend their country than the count had indicated. Specifically, young black men were greatly underestimated.

Over 5 percent of the population was left out of the 1940 Census. As a result, the Census Bureau began a program to measure and understand the undercount. The undercount in the Census declined steadily across the decades until 1980 when the Census counted 98.8 percent of the population, an undercount of 1.2 percent.

However, while the total undercount grew smaller across time, the difference between black and nonblack undercounts did not change much. In fact, between 1940 and 1970, the difference actually increased slightly. In 1990, things really got bad. The net undercount went from 1.2 percent in 1980, to 1.6 percent, and the difference between black and nonblack was the highest ever measured.

The real story was even worse. The General Accounting Office estimated that there were over 26 million errors in the 1990 Census. About 10 million people were missed, 6 million people were counted twice and 10 million were counted in the wrong place. That is an error rate of over 10 percent.

We might ask why the Census Bureau has not done something about that problem. Well, the answer is that they have tried. But the efforts of its statisticians have been blocked by politicians trying to preserve their domain. The Census Bureau was under pressure to correct the errors in the 1980 Census,

but at that time the technology for measuring and correcting those errors was not well enough developed to do the job. However, following the 1980 Census, the Census Bureau developed a research program to be ready to correct the 1990 Census.

The research went forward, but when time came to put the system in place to correct the 1990 Census, the Under Secretary for Economic Statistics at the Department of Commerce, an appointee of President Reagan, blocked implementation.

New York City, and several others, sued the Secretary to force the Secretary to implement the measures necessary to correct the 1990 Census, but before the case could be heard by the courts, the Commerce Department settled. The settlement called for a scaled down survey to measure the errors and an evaluation panel of eight experts, four appointed by the Secretary of Commerce, four appointed by the plaintiff.

In the end, they split 4-4. The four experts selected by the Secretary of Commerce recommended against correcting the Census. The four experts selected by the plaintiffs recommended in favor of using the survey to correct the Census. The experts at the Census Bureau voted 7 to 2 in favor of the correction and the director of the Census Bureau recommended to the Secretary that the Census counts be corrected.

The Secretary, however, refused to follow that advice and in the end the Supreme Court upheld his power to do so.

Dr. Barbara Bryant, President Bush's Director of the Census Bureau in 1990, set in place a research program to develop plans for the 2000 census that were above reproach. She called on the National Academy of Science for help, as well as talented statisticians and demographers throughout the country.

That research program led to the design for the census that we are fighting over today: A design to correct the 26 million errors. A design to reduce the cost of the census. A design that is fundamentally more fair and honest. That is the design that our colleagues want to tear down. If they succeed, they will take the whole census down with them.

Our colleagues who oppose correcting the mistakes made in 1990 have no credible alternative. Their only response to fixing the problem is to throw more money at it. We will give the census a blank check, they cry. Friends, money will not solve this problem.

Counting noses didn't work for Thomas Jefferson when there were less than 4 million persons in the United States and few of those were west of the Allegheny Mountains. Counting noses certainly will not work when there are over 260 million people spread across the 48 contiguous states, Alaska, Hawaii and the territories.

Every expert and scientific panel that has studied this problem has agreed with the Census Bureau. To fix the 10 percent error in the 1990 census you have to go beyond traditional counting techniques.

The opponents of an accurate census are quick to claim the plan for the 2000 census is unconstitutional, but none of the constitutional

scholars they claim to support their views has yet to put pen to paper. There has yet to be published a serious scholarly article that makes their case.

The opponents of an accurate census are quick to scream that the plan for the 2000 census is against the will of Congress.

However, Congress ceded its authority to design and run the census to the Secretary of Commerce. The opponents of an accurate census know they cannot pass a veto proof bill that rescinds that authority.

The plans for the 2000 census are sound. However, the opponents of an accurate census are doing everything in their power to make sure those plans fail.

If the next census exceeds the error rate of the last one, it will not be the fault of the employees at the Census Bureau.

If hundreds of Americans are left out of the democratic process because of flaws in the census, it will not be the fault of the Clinton Administration.

If the next census is a failure it will be the fault of those here in Congress who are doing everything they can to block a fair and accurate count.

ADMINISTRATION SHOULD NOT CERTIFY MEXICO AS COMPLIANT WITH DRUG LAWS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, today I understand that the administration is about to certify Mexico as compliant with the United States law that requires an assessment of every country that is making an effort to eradicate or eliminate drug trafficking or drug production.

It is rather sad that the administration would certify Mexico to a law that was designed to give benefits for trade, foreign assistance, financial assistance and military assistance to a country that is making progress in these areas, and choose to do so with Mexico because I cannot think of any offender worse than Mexico. In fact, in the drug war, Mexico is a disaster.

The major source of almost all hard narcotics coming into the United States across our borders is Mexico. In fact, the major source of cocaine, of heroin, of methamphetamines and marijuana coming into the United States, the vast quantities that are coming into our country and destroying our cities, our communities, our children, are coming in, in fact, from Mexico. And today this administration, I understand, is going to certify Mexico as compliant.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell my colleagues that Mexico is involved in narcotics up to its eyeballs, from the President's office down to the policeman on the beat. We know this. We have had hearings in our Subcommittee on National Security, International Affairs, and Criminal Justice that I serve on that confirm Mexico's lack and failure to cooperate in the war on drugs.