

# The Fourth House

If you are one in four, you got the Blue Form, with note of instruction from the Chief Snoop. The author tore his up—and awaits the worst, Fourth Amendment in hand.

WILLIAM F. RICKENBACKER

The 1960 Census is being conducted with two separate questionnaires. One, a short form printed on white paper, asks the questions necessary to an enumeration of the population. This questionnaire fulfills the constitutional requirement; it is being administered in every household in the nation; and right gladly have I submitted to it in my house.

But there is a second questionnaire, printed on blue paper, unconscionably long, uncivilly inquisitorial, and absolutely unconstitutional. This form, we are told, is being sent to every fourth house in the nation. My house was the fourth house, and I have studied this snooping questionnaire. It does not relate to any constitutional requirement that I know of; it has not been addressed to the population as a whole; and I shall not answer it.

Indeed, I have already torn it up. Some day, when the summer satrap of the Snooper State comes to ask me why I refuse to contribute my share of statistics to the national numbers game, I shall call for my lawyer. For my house claims protection under the Fourth Amendment: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized."

"Go," I shall say, "and report to your Snoopers! Tell them that I shall resist this unreasonable search! I plead the Fourth!"

The Census is authorized by Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution. It requires an enumeration of the population for the purpose of fixing proportional representation. The Consti-

tution makes no further reference to the Census.

For those who have not seen the infamous blue questionnaire, I believe a description is in order. The cover page is spangled with seven solid black five-pointed stars marching across the top. Below them appears the name, "U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census," and below that the seal of the Department of Commerce. Then we see the title of the form: "Household Questionnaire for the 1960 Census of Population and Housing." Then follows a letter from Mr. Burgess, the Director of the Bureau of the Census, and at the bottom of the cover two boxes enclosing more type. One, slanted, says, "This is an official document of the United States of America." The other says this: "Confidential—The Census is required by the United States Constitution and further authorized by 13 U. S. C. 5, 9, 141, 221-4. The law requires that the inquiries be answered completely and accurately, and guarantees that the information furnished will be accorded confidential treatment. The Census report cannot be used for purposes of taxation, investigation, or regulation."

The first two pages of questions relate to the material possessions of the citizen. Is his house on a city lot, or a place of less than ten acres, or more than ten acres? Did the yield of nature provide sales of more or less than \$250 last year on the less-than-ten-acre place, or sales of more or less than \$50 for the more-than-ten-acre place? When was the house built? How many bedrooms? How is it heated? Is there a clothes drier? Washing machine? How many bathrooms? Whence comes the water? What form of sewage disposal? Is there a basement, a telephone? What

is the telephone number? How many automobiles? What is the market value of the house? If this a trailer, is it mobile? If this is a rented lodging, how much is paid for electricity, gas, water, fuel? Does rental include use of land for farming?

## *Intricate Inquisition*

I cannot imagine any relation between these questions and the constitutional requirement to enumerate the people. How lush grows the federal jungle! The tentacles of its creepers pierce the walls of all the homes in the land. How can a man be less than outraged by this destruction of his privacy? Consider the questions asked every member of the house!

What's your name? What's your relation to the head of the house? Where were you born? If you were born outside the country, what language was spoken in your home? What country was your father born in? Your mother? How many years of schooling have you had? Did you finish the last grade? Have you been to school since February 1st, 1960? When were you first married? If you're a girl, how many babies have you had? Did you work last week? How many hours? Were you looking for work, laid off, absent because of illness, on vacation? When did you last work? What kind of work was it? Name of employer? How do you travel to and from work? Did you work last year? How much did you earn? In wages? In profits and fees? How much income do you have from social security, pensions, veteran's payments, rent, interest, dividends, unemployment insurance, welfare payments, and other sources?

These personal questions, let me repeat, are asked not in order to

enumerate the people, but to advance some secret designs not divulged to us common citizens and not authorized in the Constitution. In God's name, what purpose does this inquisition serve?

We know that the long blue snooper is not the true Census. It asks questions not related to the information needed to fix proportional representation; it is distributed separately from the true Census questionnaire; and it is not distributed to the population as a whole.

Indeed, I suspect that the meddlers who designed the blue snooper attempted to compensate for this lack of legal authority by dressing the cover page in the rich and pretentious but borrowed and certainly specious trappings of Official Authority. Thus the seven stately stars, the names of governmental departments and bureaus, the letter from Chief Snoop Burgess, exhortations to answer every question, skip nothing, and return within three days! It all looks very official, doesn't it? But if this is the official census, then what was that white questionnaire that went to all my neighbors?

### *No Legal Authorization*

Perhaps the Bureau of the Census will explain that it merely desires to have statistics. The desire is harmless, it will say, because the information must by law remain confidential, and it may not by law be used for purposes of taxation, regulation, or investigation. But we all know that a statistical survey may be conducted with a sample far smaller than one-quarter of the whole market. I know of major business decisions correctly taken on the basis of a survey of a few thousand people. If the Bureau desires merely a few statistics, how can it defend its decision to send this intricate and prying questionnaire to every fourth house in the land?

But the Bureau, being a Bureau, will surely say that it wants (or perhaps it needs!) the most accurate statistics possible. If absolute accuracy were the requirement, as it is in the enumeration, then why wasn't this long blue snooper aimed at every citizen? What's to stop the Bureau from that? And a second question: if the results of the survey must remain confidential and may not be

used for purposes of taxation, investigation, or regulation, then why in Snoop's name do they have to be so accurate?

Furthermore, although the Bureau desires statistics, the fact that it desires them does not constitute legal power to get them. The Bureau is authorized to enumerate, not evaluate the population. Perhaps ten years from now, in the next Census, the Bureau will desire to tabulate other aspects of the citizenry. Perhaps by then we shall not consider it improper to be asked how much cash we have on hand and in checking accounts; where we do our banking; who our attorney is; what our church is; how we voted in the last election; and perhaps a hundred questions on sexual activity. Perhaps the Bureau will require one household out of four to be psychoanalyzed.

Still further, I roundly dispute the value of any statistics susceptible of development from the questions asked in the long blue snooper. The Bureau probably does not have the honesty to admit that it is collecting statistics for the use of commercial enterprises. It must, if it tries at all to justify itself, rest its intrusion upon some implied powers concealed in the "general welfare" clause. It will say it is simply ascertaining the quality of the general welfare when it tots up the television sets. I dispute this thesis, because I believe that the welfare of a nation can be measured only in terms of the moral excellence of its citizens. The sewage system used at my house has nothing to do with the state of citizenship, the moral aspiration, the intellectual life, and the tradition of the occupants. The quality of love and laughter abiding in my house cannot be described in terms of electrical appliances. And the welfare of a nation cannot be described in any terms but these—its morals, its minds, its traditions, its love, its exuberance. When an officious little snoop pretends to measure my citizenship by inquiring into my material possessions I am insulted and sickened. In the final analysis the questions asked by Chief Snoop are frivolous, irrelevant, and beneath the dignity of a citizen.

I hereby propose an experiment, in order to prove how useless is the Bureau's effort to collect statistics on

washing machines. My experiment proceeds as follows. Send a penny postcard to the president of each of the ten largest manufacturers of electrical equipment (names and addresses on request), asking him to tell you what his market research department knows about the total number of washing machines currently installed in the households of this nation. Make an arithmetic average of the responses. Then, in the autumn, when the Bureau publishes its statistics, see if your answers aren't within 5 per cent of the Bureau's figures. One curious student with thirty cents and a few days' patience can secure the figures that the Bureau of the Census will secure only after invading ten million houses with 160,000 snoopers, exercising its multi-million-dollar computing machines for half a year, and spending millions of dollars on payroll and printing costs. And not the least of the costs that the Bureau will impose upon us citizens is moral: for it will surely and stealthily have contributed to the decline in personal privacy in this land. All this, to check our plumbing!

### *Prelude to Spending*

If the information gained may not be used for taxation or investigation or regulation, there seems to be only one remaining use to which the statistics may be put: they may help business. Thus the federal government inquires into the state of my mechanical appliances in order to assure that business knows its markets. How I commute to work is important to the amoebas in Washington, because a federal commuting plan is no more unthinkable than a federal highway plan. (If you live in Greenwich and commute to New York, of course you are a certified citizen of the Interstate Commerce Commission!) The structure, size, value, and furnishings of my house are of great interest to that patriotic group of lobbyists, the housing gang. And, if the federal housing agencies decide to liberate me from my present squalor, what more "scientific" ground for their action could there be, than the factual, true, and up-to-date statistics collected by Chief Snoop? The chain of action is this:

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idle curiosity, then a survey, then statistics; publication, discussion, and analysis of the statistics; identification of a weakness, a lack, a social maladjustment underlying the statistical description; declaration of a broad national goal that presupposes setting such maladjustment to rights; finally, federal action to cure the disease.

Chief Snoop's idle curiosity is the spark, and our acquiescence in his intrusion into our homes is the fuel, and the federal meddling in our daily commercial and family lives will be the conflagration in which our lives, as we used to live them, shall go up in smoke.

How I travel to my office, and what I do there, is my business, exactly and exclusively. To judge by the taxes exacted of me, my business must be doing all right.

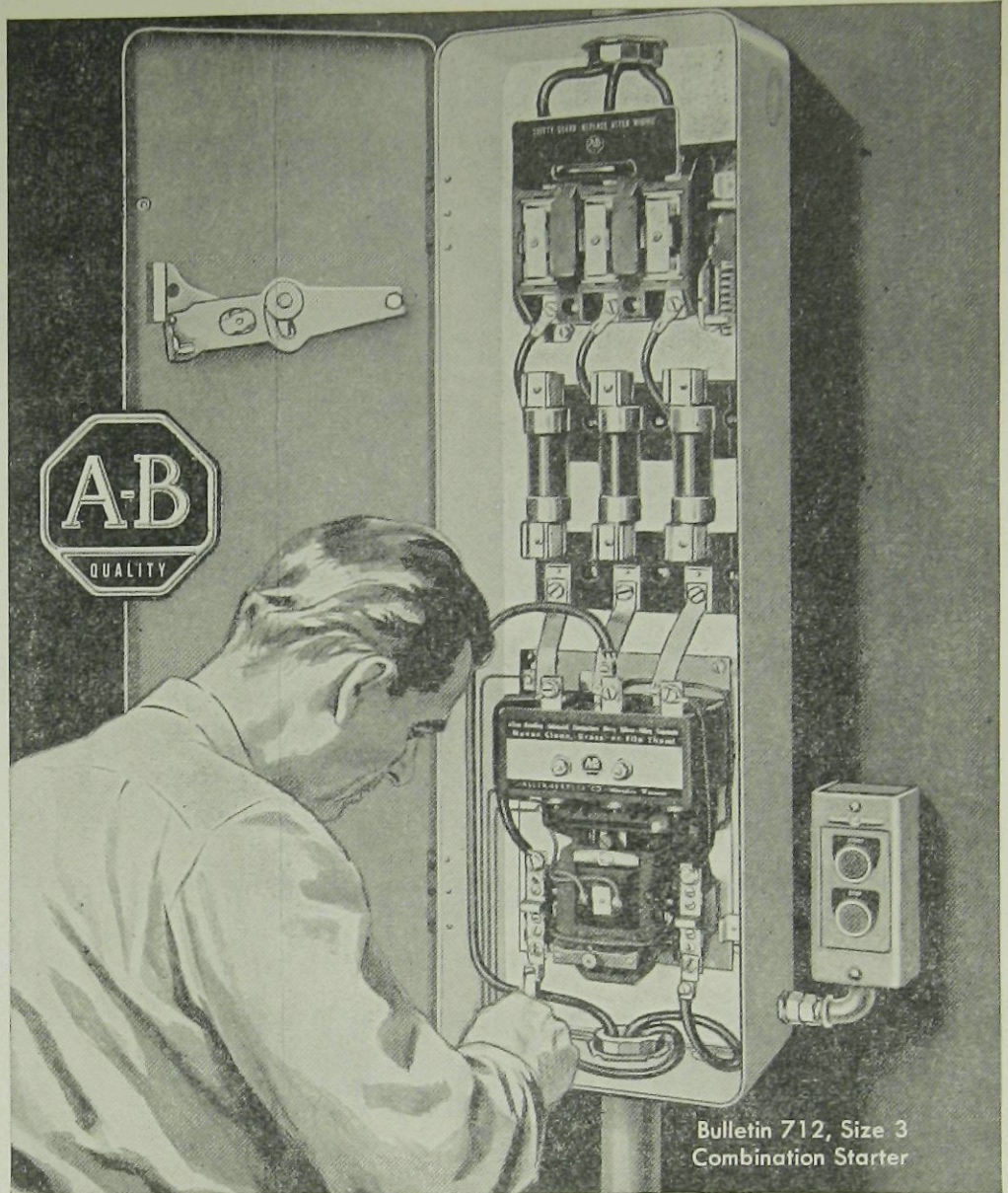
### Governing vs. Meddling

The business of the federal republic is to establish justice, regulate the currency, and maintain defensive military power. To judge by the state of justice, money, and might in the land, the business of the federal government is collapsing. Whither has justice flown, when a South American mob exercises power of life or death over a condemned criminal cowering in California? What has happened to the currency as a measure or store of value, when I cannot purchase a decent car today for less than twice what I paid only seven years ago? Can we say we have an army or a navy when we refuse to avail ourselves of their protection at times when our citizens are jailed and persecuted by insolent foreign powers?

Instead of governing, the Snoopers State is meddling. And the more it meddles in my business, the less it governs its own.

"Snooper Chief," I say to Mr. Burgess, "Snooper Chief, I plead the Fourth! You're so interested in my sewage, you'll be happy to know that I have sent you a sample under separate cover."

For the house that is fourth on Mr. Burgess' list comes first on my list. I stand in my home a private citizen; and here I shall stand, until the word threshold has lost its meaning.



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