

Houston Philosophical Society
Minutes of 627th Meeting, January 16th, 2009

Rice University
Cohen House

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. by President Patten with introductory remarks. He reminded members of the timetable for the nomination and selection of new members and solicited recommendations. Information on membership and membership applications is available on line at www.hps.rice.edu and the password for the site is Socrates.

Various members introduced their guests for the meeting. Members were reminded of the opportunity to bring guests.

President Patten then called on society member Governor Bill Hobby to introduce the speaker of the evening, Dr. Steven Murdock. His announced topic was "Population Change in the US: Implications for Socioeconomic Resources and the 2010 Census."

Governor Hobby introduced Murdock as the former state demographer for Texas who was appointed in June of 2007 to be director of the U.S. Census Bureau and who the previous week resigned that position to join the Rice faculty as a Professor of _____ . Hobby mentioned that Dr. Murdock is the author of twelve books and some 150 articles. He reminded the group that the first census director was Moses and that demography is a divine calling hence the Book of Numbers in the Old Testament.

Dr. Murdock described the Census Bureau as a large organization that will utilize some 700,000 workers for the upcoming decennial census. They are the collectors of federal data from the census and various agencies and department of the government.

In 2010 they expect to deal with some 135,000,000 households containing some 310,000,000 persons. He reminded us that the Constitution calls for a count of all residents and not just citizens. The methodology will be to drive down from housing units to households to individuals.

The post office will be utilized as a tool in this process along with the cooperation of local governments in identifying household units. This is to be accomplished by April of this year. In February of 2010 letters seeking a response will be mailed and in April (after a March reminder) replacement questionnaires will be used with various methods of follow up. By the end of the summer of 2010 tabulations will begin. By December 31, 2010 the bureau must submit counts for reapportionment of the House of Representatives and by April of 2011 the numbers must be set for redistricting in each state.

The process established hopes for better address with the help of the local jurisdictions and of the post office. A second mailing will be utilized and questionnaires will be in English and Spanish. User kits dealing with 59 different languages will be utilized in follow up contacts once the requisite language is discovered so that interviews can be conducted. In 2000 a short form and a long form were utilized in an effort to reduce the undercount. Annually since then some three million households have been surveyed annually on questions raised in the long form. In 2010 the process is expected to cost some \$14.5 billion compared to \$6.5 billion in 2000.

Problems expected are establishing contact places for the homeless and dealing with counting other itinerant populations.

In Europe there is far less cooperation on the part of the people and in Germany, for example, the census effort failed.

Murdock made some predictions for potential problems this round. He anticipates a more contentious census this year than previously. There are no enforceable penalties for not responding to the census. There existence of slim margins when the last seat in the House of Representatives is to be assigned and the political pressures will be particularly great there. Governor Hobby mentioned earlier that some states wanted to count in their population residents who were abroad when the census was taken citing the efforts of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) to have their far flung missionaries counted.

Eventually the raw data will be available publicly. The new form should produce a wealth of data. Privacy of individual data will be maintained including denial of access to it by other governmental agencies.

In response to one question, Dr. Murdock reminded us that the Constitution does not require the enumeration of citizens but of persons.