

Do you not think also that the American people are so used to being asked to answer question on forms and questionnaires that even if they did have any objections, they probably would just say, "Well, I will just go ahead and answer it because I know if I do not I will get in trouble. I am required under the law to do this. If I protest, I will have to go to court and this is going to cost money, and I really have no way of appealing this."

Do you not feel that the inclination is, whether you like the questions or not, to just answer them and shut up?

Mr. ECKLER. Mr. Cornish, I take a somewhat more optimistic view about our people. I am inclined to think that the greater acceptance of questions and the better cooperation are due to the fact that more and more people realize that a nation like ours needs to have statistics for guidance in many decisions, decisions that are made at the local level, the national level, by businesses, and so on.

They get some exposure to this in the schools through the statistics that the children talk about, and get exposed to, and I believe that the Nation as a whole is getting more sophisticated in this matter and there is a greater acceptance of the fact that when you operate in a free society, you need information about the activities of our economy.

So I am hopeful that it is not just because of a passive acceptance, but rather a belief that this is a part of the duty of citizens in this kind of society.

Mr. CORNISH. I would agree, Mr. Director, that perhaps the citizen might not have any objection to answering all of the other sections of the farm census questionnaire, but possibly he might have a legitimate objection to answering some of the questions in section 11.

This raises the point what happens in this instance, where a person does have what he considers to be a legitimate objection.

Mr. ECKLER. I would like to expand a little bit, and this partly is brought about as a result of some of the chairman's remarks earlier.

I think that the Census Bureau does have a focal responsibility in this matter of considering privacy, and while we welcome the help of the Budget Bureau, which has to review these things, I think that we do have a very key role in this matter. It is forced upon us by just the nature of things. We are in the business of taking censuses and surveys. If we become characterized as an organization that is asking unreasonable things, is improperly guilty of undue prying or anything else, it damages our ability to do our job, which we think is an important job.

So we must be, I think, continuously mindful of the fact that an unreasonable inquiry in one area may affect cooperation in other areas, whether it is a census or whether it is a job we do for another agency. We take all this seriously because we do a good many jobs for other agencies and they sometimes have some questions that we have great concern about. We are the ones that bear the burden, we are the ones that have agents out there asking questions, and we expect to be in business for some time.

So this is a concern. If citizens come to the conclusion that we are asking prying questions, questions not pertinent to the purposes of the job, it will have an effect. We give a great deal of consideration to this, and I think our committee, as Dr. Taeuber says, also gives a great deal of attention to this.