DISCOVERY BY CENSUS

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An exciting field of exploration is open to those who crave the thrill of new discoveries. It is a field of exploration which can be carried on at home after the chores are done and with little cost. It will pay dividends in terms of knowledge and understanding. It will help to connect what is observed in the local community with what is going on in the rest of the state and in the nation.

This field of exploration lies in the impressive tables and statistics put out by the United States bureau of census. These imposing tables of figures will tell many interesting stories of trends and changes which are now going on. To the person who is initiated they will foretell the beginning of new problems which will be the subject of much discussion and action in the future.

Rumors Contradicted

We find, for example, that the 1935 census of agriculture contradicts many of the rumors current during the dry years that the Great Plains area was losing much of its population. Actually in Colorado there was a loss of only 2.3 per cent between 1930 and 1935 in the number of persons living on farms. This loss of less than 7,000 people did not all occur in the non-irrigated counties by any means. While we do not know what has happened since January 1, 1935, the census for Colorado and other states shows that the plains areas have actually been holding their own as far as numbers of people are concerned.

Along with this stability of population has come an increase in number of farms. Colorado had 4,000 more farms reported in 1935 than
in 1930, bringing the total up to 63,644. Much of the increase in number was around the large cities and in the mining districts. As a result of the increase in number of farms, there was a drop in the average size of farm from 482 acres in 1930 to 471 acres in 1935. This means that there has been some increase in part-time and subsistence farming around the cities and in the mining districts.

**Back to the Land**

If there had been an increase in the small part-time farms, one would expect that part of it was due to a "back to the land" movement. This guess is found to be true, because almost 10 per cent of the persons living on farms on January 1, 1935, had lived at a nonfarm residence five years earlier. The shift from cities to farms was most noticeable in the areas immediately surrounding large cities, particularly Denver.

The farm tenant problem is one which is arousing more and more interest because of the many evil results of the kind of tenancy which we have. Almost 40 per cent of all Colorado farmers are now tenants, which is an increase from 1930. In Iowa more than 49 per cent of the farmers are tenants. One of the things which is a bad result of tenancy is the great amount of moving about from farm to farm. One tenant out of every three has been less than one year on the farm which he now operates, although only 6 per cent of the owners have been on their farms such a short time. Another 17 per cent of the tenants have been on their farms only one year; 25 per cent more have been on their farms from two to four years.

**Owners More Stable**

Owners can be much more stable than tenants. This is shown by the fact that 56 per cent of them have been on their present farms
10 years or more, but only 11 per cent of the tenants have remained on their present farms for so long a time.

This moving is important because it shows the great instability of tenant families. Every move, even for a short distance, means a break of social relations with schools and churches and neighbors. In addition, there is often a financial loss incurred in moving. There is no incentive for improving land or house or buildings, if a family stays in the same place only a year or two. Community life suffers from all this moving around just as much as do the individual families. Co-operatives will not succeed if the members are constantly moving away.

**Shows Depression Effect**

The census tables also show the effect of the depression on the farmer in deflating real estate values. The average value of a farm dropped from $10,497 in 1930 to $6580 in 1935. Of course, it has risen materially again in the last two years.

The effect of the depression is also shown by figures giving the amount of time which farmers spend working off the farms. It shows that they felt it was necessary or desirable to add to their farm income by finding an extra job. In 1934, Colorado farmers worked more than 2,000,000 days at jobs not connected with their own farms. This amounted to an average of 84 days for each of the 40 per cent of the farmers who were so engaged. Most of the extra was at a non-agricultural job which not only shows that farmers had to depend more upon other sources of income during the depression, but also shows the increase in part-time farming.

These few things which have been pointed out show a few of the
changes in which a clue is given by census tables: Growth of smaller farms, of part-time farming, the "back to the land" movement, the increase of work off the farm, and the increase in farm tenancy all help to predict some of the social problems which are going to call more and more for consideration if the trends continue. These facts can be discovered by any person who will make the effort to dig them out. The reward will be in terms of greater knowledge and understanding of our rural problems.