

Shortgrass Country
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Preliminary census reports show the Shortgrass population to be on the decline. San Angelo is the only point to have an upswing.

Expert head counters claim that they foresaw the short count in the outlying districts. Of course nearly everybody was beginning to notice how hard it was to make up a four-handed game of dominoes. It didn't take a demographer to see that solitaire was becoming the most popular card game going.

The correct human stocking ratio is hard to pinpoint. Is it better to have hombres so crowded that the ones wearing boots larger than size 8 are hard pressed for foot room, or is it better to have the country so sparsely populated that the citizens have to rely on echoes for companionship?

Ideal conditions, I think, are found in the packed megalopolitan areas. People thrive in situations where their entire existence is on a bumper-to-bumper, elbow-to-elbow basis. The slickers are a pleasure to watch as they battle their path down the sidewalks or through the streets. The determined expression on their vacant faces gives you the feeling that all is well in America. Their unending tenseness assures that the country is on the alert.

Cities, as you may know, were formed years ago to bring a common protection against the bandit gangs who were roaming the countryside, robbing the rich after they'd cleaned out the peasants. (As a kid, I fell for that old Robin Hood tale, until I heard how well fixed he left his widow.)

Once the populace was concentrated, the country crooks were put of business. Criminals had to become organized to pay their Mafia dues. The outlands were cleaned of robbers and the cities were plagued by only 19 of the 20 crimes known to medieval man. As time passed, the metropolitan regions became relatively safe in the daytime hours.

Country life is a different matter. The atmosphere is too relaxed. Funerals and weddings are still conducted on a personal basis. Neighbors waste hours of time visiting. Rural inhabitants lack the push and shove attitude of their city relatives. They don't seem to have what it takes to trample each other down. You see them every day opening doors for women and stepping aside for old folks. Unaggressive would be a good term to describe them. Well-bred would be another definition.

The census isn't going to mean anything as long as people aren't culled. Ranchers learned a long time ago that quality is an important factor. Herds today would look worse than a fresh picked tree sloth if all we'd ever done was count them.

Switzerland is already studying a plan to ship 300,000 head of foreigners. Out of a population of six million, the Swiss are going to do some worthwhile sorting.

I don't know how they are going to go about it. I suppose they'll work the jailhouses and the hospitals for the unmerchantables and then shape up the top end. Sorting 300,000 head of people is going to be a big job for a country that specializes in watchmaking and raising St. Bernard dogs. Before they are finished, they may wish that an epidemic had done part of the work for them.

Chambers of Commerce are unhappy over our lack of growth. However, they need not worry about a people shortage as long as youngsters can get together in the spring.