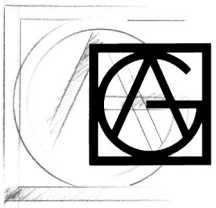

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Keynote Address: Kenneth Prewitt

Luncheon Plenary Session

Kenneth Prewitt was recently appointed Dean of the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science at the New School for Social Research in New York City, following a highly publicized stint as the director of the United States Census Bureau for the 2000 Census.

November 5, 2001, 12:30 p.m.

[Transcript begins after start of session]

Prewitt: If we go back to the 1930s, with the emergence of national socialism in Germany, that was a group of fanatics who thought they had to pursue the final solution. It was a group of fanatics who completely believed that they already had the answer. This was not an answer that had ambiguity; this was not an answer that was negotiable. This was a Truth, capital "T" Truth.

The military resources of the Allied Powers defeated the Axis Powers, but the ideas of Nazism were actually defeated by the ideas of liberal democracy. That is, the real struggle, as we used to say, was for the hearts and minds of people. It sounds like a cliché, because it was said so often during the Cold War. But in some rather fundamental sense, this is indeed about the hearts and minds of people.

It's about democracy in a slightly different way. Meredith Monk said last night that democracy is an argument. The thing about an argument is that it presumes there's an answer, but you don't yet have it. That's really at the core of what democratic liberal values are. You've got to argue about things because you think there is an answer, but you don't have it. It's when there's a political cultural movement that says it has the answer, the answer is already known, that you begin to introduce serious dangers into the world.

So if we take what Meredith said as a starting point, and then take a hard look at what's happening right now to American society, you'll see why I'm going to say to you by the time I'm finished that the arts community that you all represent is going to have to sort out some very, very difficult issues in order to help us all understand what kind of democracy, what kind of liberal democratic values, we are going to fashion for the next quarter of a century. How well we do that will, I am convinced, be a very large part of the story of how well the ideology, the final solution mentality that brought us September 11th, will recede or whether it will grow.

I'm going to start the comments in a place you might not expect. I'm going to talk about something called replacement migration. Replacement migration points to the following simple fact: That in Western Europe today, thirty-one nations are in a negative fertility situation. Between now and 2050, Italy will reduce its population size by twenty-eight percent, Germany by eighteen percent. When you see your population decline like that, not only are you experiencing a population decline, but also the ratio of the working age to the total population shrinks, because a declining population is also an aging population.

For Italy to maintain the ratio between the working-age population and the total population that it experiences today, for the next thirty, forty, fifty years, it will have to allow about three hundred fifty thousand new immigrants a year. For Germany to maintain its ratio, about a half a million a year. That's what replacement migration is. Replacement migration is when a country hits a point of declining fertility, the only way it can maintain itself as a population is by allowing immigrants to come in.

Now you say, why in the world is he starting with that little demographic fact? The only way that replacement migration can happen anywhere in the world is to enormously transform the demographic base of a society which is now receiving the immigrant flows. The immigrant flows are not going to come from places like the country receiving them; they're going to come from different kinds of places.

Thirty-one OECD countries, all of Western Europe, plus Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan have negative population growth. They have to have migration, or manage declining populations. It's very difficult to manage declining populations. Keep this simple fact in mind: replacement migration. Because as you will see, it plays a very key part of the story I want to tell.

The other simple thing to keep in mind is a little phrase called "Mark more than one box." Two hundred and ten years of census taking said, "Only mark one box." That is, there are a small number of discrete racial categories; everybody fits into one of them.

Those categories changed over time as the country struggled with what race meant, but what never changed was the presumption that you could fit into, and were forced to fit in, just one of those little boxes. Census 2000 said, "Oops! If you happen to be two or three of those things, mark two or three of them." You are what you want to be racially.

"Mark more than one box," as a transformation of racial thinking in this country, is going to intersect with this notion called replacement migration, to absolutely transform not just this society, but also

other societies in the next quarter of a century. That's the point that I want to get across to you, and it is problematic for liberal democratic values. Because liberal democratic values, of the sort that we inherited from the American enlightenment, are not going to work very well.

Let me just do a breathless tour of American demographic history. Starting in 1500, people lived on the continental United States, what we now recognize as the continental United States, 3.5 million Native American Indians. Explorers came, then the colonists came, settled the eastern seaboard. Spanish came up the West Coast. By 1790, we took our first census of the thirteen colonies. The census counted the following: eighty percent northwestern European; seventy percent of the total were British, Welsh, Irish – that is, British Isles – and then a scattering of northern German, Dutch, Scandinavian. Eighty percent of the population. Nineteen percent of the population was African-American. Black. One percent, American Indian. So between 1500 and 1800, the population of what we now recognize as the United States is Northwestern European Protestant, with a resident Black population, and a dwindling American Indian population.

The nineteenth century unfolds around the following key tension: You opened up the external borders – massive migration across the nineteenth century – and closed down the internal borders. The external border allowed people to come in. The internal borders decided who really belonged, which is to say, who had civic membership in the society. So the tension across the nineteenth century, even well into the twentieth century, was the tension between, if the external borders are going to be open, the internal borders have got to be closed.

Here's how it played out. 1800, the country is now settled. It's got its own Constitution, it's got a central government. Opening up the West, Louisiana Purchase. Thomas Jefferson said, "Aha! No problem. The West will be populated by yeoman farmers from Virginia." High fertility. It was a young population in 1800. High fertility, very sparsely populated anyway, enormous mineral wealth, waterways, agricultural land, timber. Move West! Exploit it all! Oh, yes, the Indians were in the way. In fact, Jefferson said something very important. Jefferson said, "The Indians have two choices." They either assimilate – i.e., they lose their Indian-ness in the process of, in effect, becoming like us, – or they have got to be relocated. Very, very interesting. Because he thought, even at that time, that the Indians could move across the color line into whiteness, but not the blacks. There was no sense whatsoever that the African-Americans in 1800 could ever become white, that they could ever assimilate into the dominant culture.

Jefferson and his colleagues were wrong in a major way. Fertility rates in the United States among the colonial settler population were not enough to settle the West. Almost immediately, the shipping industry, railroad industry, the gradual growth of the factories, the industrialization of the cities, needed workers. Where were the workers supposed to come from? They came from Europe. Well, if there weren't very many Britishers who wanted to come, who were they going to be? Well, more Irish. Potato Famine. More Germans; not just northern German, southern Germany.

By 1850, the Catholic Church is the largest denomination in the United States. Not larger than all Protestants, but larger than any single Protestant denomination. Enormous migration of Catholics into the United States from roughly 1800 to 1840, 1850. Enormous migration of Germans, Scandinavians.

Then after the war, new floods of immigrants came into the country, largely from central Europe, southern Europe. Italians now joined Irish Catholics. But also Eastern Orthodox, and Jews. By the time we end the nineteenth century, what had started as a country that was entirely Protestant European became a country which was Protestant-Catholic-Jewish European.

That was not easy going. Ku Klux Klan, Know-Nothing Party, very virulent anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, across the entire nineteenth century into the twentieth century. Lots and lots of nasty political battles. The attempt to racialize the Irish, for example, and the Italians, swarthy Mediterraneans, a different race, they weren't part of the Anglo race. Very nasty politics. Fundamentally, however, we gradually, gradually figure out a way to deal with the fact that this country, from being a fragment of Europe, had become pan-European.

Now how did we manage to do that? We actually did it by denying something else that was happening to our demography in the nineteenth century. Who else was here? Native American Indians were here, we've already established that right from the beginning. African-Americans were here, twenty percent of

the population was African-American. But the entire nineteenth century picks up lots of other groups.

The Louisiana Purchase we purchased, in effect, the Creoles and the French settlers. Spanish-American War, Mexican-American War, 1848, eighty thousand Mexicans in the Southwest now belong to the United States. Purchased Alaska, now we have a native Alaskan population. The Marines in Hawaii, now you have a native Pacific Islander population. Coolie labor on the West Coast from Japan, from China, to do the mining, build the railroads. Now you have an Asian population.

What happened in the nineteenth century was that the internal politics tried to create barriers between the Anglo Protestant population and all other groups. They lost that battle with respect to the other Europeans. They won that battle with respect to all non-Europeans; i.e., the Catholics and the Jews gradually gained civic membership. The Hispanics, the Asians, the Native Indians, and of course, the African-Americans, the Creoles, did not. Native Alaskans, native Pacific Islanders, they were denied civic membership right through the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. So you created a lot of internal borders.

So, we leave the nineteenth century with the following general point: You've got a set of democratic principles, and you're now trying to align your demography – that is, the actual people who make up your population – you're trying to align your demography with your democracy, and you actually partially get there, but not completely. You get there well enough to get the Catholics and the Jews in, but not all of the other groups.

You end the nineteenth century and start the twentieth century with that as the fundamental premise of the country. We will move forward with our democratic principles, open civic membership, citizenship rights, and civil rights. But not for everybody who lives here, only for certain population groups who live here.

Then the First World War, we get a dip in immigration, and then in the 1920s, after the war, the old Know-Nothings, the nativist instincts of the United States got very worried about new immigration patterns, wrote very, very restrictive immigration laws, and closed immigration down almost completely from 1924 to 1965. No fresh immigration to speak of, very small numbers of refugees around the Second World War, but no fresh immigration.

So here's the story thus far. You have transformed the demography of the country, and you have adjusted the politics of the country, but you're still not aligned. You don't quite have the democratic politics that matches the demography. Civil Rights Movement, 1960s, in a very fundamental sense takes up this challenge. It says there's something wrong about our democracy when there are population groups who, because of the color of their skin, their ethnic background, or language, or whatever, don't have full civic membership.

Now the Civil Rights Movement's very important, obviously, in many, many respects. Not to forget how it started. It started – go back to the first speeches of Martin Luther King and the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement after Rosa Parks and so forth – it started on the assumption that you could have a democracy that did not recognize race and differences. It started on the assumption that you could create a race-blind democracy. Well, discrimination did not give way, even though we passed the laws in 1964 and 1965 primarily, and then added laws on and on. Discrimination did not give way, as we well know.

I'm going go all the way back to 1790, and then rush us up again to 1960. What did we do in 1790? I gave you the numbers: nineteen percent African-American, one percent Indian, eighty percent European. How did we know that? We put a race question into the census. We classified the population racially. We could have classified it other ways. We could have classified the population in terms of religion. How many Catholics, how many Protestants, how many Quakers, and so forth. We didn't classify that way. We classified racially. In every census, 1790, 1800, 1810, 1820, right through to 1960, we classified and counted the population in terms of its racial characteristics.

Not only did we do that, but also decade after decade after decade after decade of discriminatory social policies and laws used the racial classification system that the Census Bureau provided for us. We ran the Jim Crow laws off of it, Separate but Equal Doctrine off of it, admitted slave states and free states on an equal basis off of it. We wrote racist immigration laws off of the census classification system. We interred the Japanese-Americans in 1940 off the census classification system, and so forth and so on.

We used a racial classification system to administer a series of discriminatory laws. 1960, you first think you're going to get rid of discrimination and you can't. Aha! The old racial classification system that had put all of that discriminatory legislation into place could now be used to undo it. You simply took the same tool and reversed its directionality a hundred and eighty degrees. Instead of being malevolent, you make it benign. Instead of being discriminatory, you'll make it anti-discriminatory. Right? It happened! How did you do that?

You did a simple little thing called "statistical proportionality." How do you know there's discrimination in a society? Well, there are Archie Bunkers, right? There are prejudiced people. All you got to do is find them and change their mindsets. How do you find them? How do you change them? Remember, we used to discuss that a lot in the 1960s and 70s. How do you find prejudiced people and make them less prejudiced? We didn't get much headway. Why? Hard to find. People didn't want to admit it.

And what would you do anyway? So you get Archie Bunker to be a little more tolerant. That didn't cause discrimination to give way.

Let's do it differently. Let's do it as follows: There are twelve percent African-Americans in the United States. There are only six percent of them in our universities, and only one percent of them in our faculty. Must be discrimination. There are so many Latinos in the population, and their access to health care is disproportionate to their numbers. There are so many American Indians, there are so many so many so manys. And they are not matched up with their rightful place in American society, in housing, in education, in employment, in health.

That is, you measured discrimination in terms of the ratio of groups which had access to certain benefits or suffered certain disadvantages. That ratio, compared to how many there were. How did you know how many there were? The Census Bureau told you.

We measured and counted by race, therefore we now have this racial classification system. We use this racial classification system to begin to attack discrimination. Patterns of, we called it, "institutional racism." Not individual prejudice, institutional racism. It could be measured.

Then you begin to create laws that deal with that statistical pattern. Lo and behold, once we had designed that as a tool, as an administrative and legal tool, other groups could use it.

Women used it to prove the glass ceiling; fifty-two percent of us in the country, only fourteen percent of us in corporate leadership roles, glass ceilings! Fix it!

The handicapped used it. "Count us!" said the handicapped. "We want to know how many of us there are so we can tell you how we're being discriminated against."

The census actually becomes a huge mechanism of creating the framework, or the platform for trying to now align our democracy with our demography. That really became the challenge the Civil Rights Movement gave to the society, from 1960 on.

Now let me catch up with the other story.

I left the immigration story in 1924, because we quit allowing immigrants to come in. Then we used the 1925 to the 1965-75 period in order to deal with this internal problem of all kinds of key parts of American society which were not realizing full civic membership. In the mid-60s this gets modified. I won't give you a detailed history of immigration law in this period, but we begin to open up immigration again.

We did it under three arguments. One, family reunification. We'd had a bracero program for Mexican workers during the Second World War, family unification. Political refugees, largely from wars that the United States itself had fomented; that is, the Vietnam War and the Central American wars, created political refugees. They have a right to come. And then family unification for them.

But primarily, of course, replacement migration. The United States native-born population, in about the late 60s, early 70s, starts to decline. Who's going to pay our Social Security? Who's going to make the beds in the hospitals and in the hotels? Who actually is even going to create the software industry?

So we loosened up our external borders again seriously in the 1960s and 70s. And we began to see immigrant flows of a magnitude that we had not seen since the nineteenth century. But this time, they were not European. This time, they were not at all European. Oh, certainly a few. But do Brits want to move over here? Do the French want to move over here? No way! They have perfectly healthy economies, they like their lives, they don't have to come

to the United States. More Americans want to go live in Britain or France than they want to come here, in that period.

But the poor countries of Latin America? The poor countries of Southeast Asia? Huge population groups now ready to come to the United States.

We are now ten percent foreign-born. Ten percent! Thirty million! New York City, forty percent foreign-born. These are all, as you know, Hispanics and Asians, disproportionately, hugely.

New African diasporas. We've got now about a half-million new Africans in the United States, from Senegal, from Somalia. In 1996, there were about forty Somalis living in Columbus, Ohio. Today there are fifteen thousand. Huge Somali population in Columbus, Ohio. They've got their own social service networks, their own jobs, run their own Koranic schools on Saturdays. Very thriving community, hardworking. We'll come back to those Somalis when I'm finished.

So you opened up the immigration gates in the 1960s to 70s. You began to transform the population of the United States.

Now, it's 2000, and we're going to do a census. These two things begin to converge, i.e., the changing nature of the demography once again of this country, but now in a much, much more complicated way than anything that we'd ever seen in the nineteenth century. And the multiple-race item. They happened simultaneously.

Let's stick with the first part of this. The country today, demographically, is the most diverse country in world history. There has never been a country made up of as many different civilizations, ethnicities, language groups, religious groups, cultural groups. Call it what we want to, there's never been a country that's literally made up of every other part of the world.

The nineteenth century was rough enough. The nineteenth century, we had to go from a Protestant, little northwest quadrant Europe country to a pan-European country. And it was rough. The only way we could do it was by ignoring and forcing out of the conversation all of the non-Europeans. But we figured out how to be a pan-European country, and by 1960 we had elected a Catholic President. Now we don't even pay attention when Jews become presidents of Ivy League universities, et cetera, et cetera. All of that was a very big deal not very long ago. Not a big deal anymore. So we figured it out.

The next challenge is to figure out how to be, to put it simply, the first nation in world history which is pan-world. Look, you know it better than I. If the nineteenth century was about how you incorporate Jews and Catholics into a Protestant America, the twenty-first century is incorporating Hindus and Buddhists and Muslims into a Christian, so-called, country. There's a school in Queens, a hundred and sixty languages represented in that school. We know the diversity is fundamentally different because it's everything and everybody.

Here's the problem as I see it. We used the racial classification system for two hundred years to try to regulate the relationships among our diverse populations. We coded our diversity racially more than any other way. That's how we classified ourselves, in terms of a very small number of discrete racial groups. We used that for malevolent reasons, and then we tried to undo all of that, starting with the Civil Rights Movement.

But it always was premised on this simple notion that everybody belonged to one of those discrete, non-overlapping groups. Multiple race item, Census 2000, mark more than one box. We started with five primary racial groups plus an "other." Six different categories produces sixty-three different permutations and combinations, since Hispanic-ness as an ethnicity, stands outside that classification, so it's Hispanic/non-Hispanic times sixty-three, that's a hundred and twenty-six different racial and ethnic groups.

Once you've gone there, there's no stopping. The Arab-Americans want to be their own racial group. The Chaldeans want to be their own racial group. Who's to say they shouldn't be? If we can have sixty-three, why can't we have more?

What is a race, anyway, for heaven's sakes? The biologists don't think it means anything. The anthropologists don't think it means anything. So who's to say we shouldn't create whatever kind of small racial groups we want to in this society?

Will the new immigrants want to become their own racial groups? Will our Somalis in Columbus, Ohio, want to be what? They're not African-American in the way that we think African-American today.

They're not seventh-generation descendants of slaves who have been here two, three centuries. In fact, they don't even get along very well with the African-Americans. They're not joining the NAACP. They're not joining the Urban League in Columbus, Ohio. They see themselves as quite separate. But separate what?

Hyphenated Americans. Where in the world did we ever come up with hyphenated Americans? 1920s, we first begin to think of ethnicity as a separate category, as something that stood outside of race.

So here's where we are as we now turn to the twenty-first century. We have lost an instrument of sorting and classification with the multiple race item, and we're bringing huge flows of new people from new places into the society. The challenge for democratic liberal values is, are we going to create a set of democratic principals that are based upon group identities? The idea of statistical proportionality produced groups. Identity politics, the politics of recognition instead of the politics of redistribution. It created a whole politics of group identity. Indeed, you all know that; you live in it all the time. We create museums around those identities. We create artwork around those identities.

But the old democratic liberal values were not about group identities. They were about individual consciousness, individual meritocracy, individual ambition, individual getting ahead. Democracy, after all, picks out individuals. Individual voters, individual jury members, individual representatives. The whole logic of democratic political values has always been based upon individual rights, not group rights.

But we've changed that over the last thirty to forty years. What I don't know, what none of us know, but I consider to be one of the great challenges for us as we now move into this century, is to fashion a set of democratic values that will deal with a new kind of diversity.

Whether that will be based on group rights, and group identities, or whether it will be some combination of that plus the old liberal democratic values of individualism, is, it seems to me, one of the great uncertainties.

So when Meredith Monk says, "We're about to live with the unknown," that's one of the very big unknowns. And when she says, "Democracy is an argument," that's the argument we're going to have. It's an argument that doesn't have a final capital "T" Truth, but it's a very critical discussion we're forced to have as a society.

Finally, how well we have it, how well we answer it, is not just for us. Because the rest of Western Europe is not far behind us. Germany and Italy and France, they're already beginning, and you see it already. But they will not be able to manage their populations without accepting huge floods of new immigrants. Those immigrants are going to come from Southeast Asia, from Africa, from Central Europe, Central Asia. They've got to. They're going to come from poor huge places to small rich places. That's always been the flow of immigration. Immigration is also age-selective and ambition-selective. That's what will happen over the next quarter, half-century.

The question then, is, what is democracy? How do we actually fashion it and make it work? We did it in the nineteenth century by keeping people out. We had the Civil Rights Movement, which said you can't do that anymore. And now it's presenting a new set of challenges, and at the same time, we're saying the old racial categories don't work, and they don't work. What is the tool of administration? What is going to be the way we're going to fashion the new politics?

I'll stop there. We'll take a few minutes for questions while the rest of our panelists arrive.

Audience: Your initial analysis talked about the ways in which the Census established racial categories going back to 1790, which then became a vehicle ultimately for social policy. One of the two questions for me is, why we don't simply throw out the whole process of looking to the census as an organizing vehicle to begin with? Now, the tension here is, you need a vehicle for administering. So I live in a dream world where you set aside the question of how do you claim government resources, which is one of the reasons why you need the census.

Perhaps the issues is, you have to come up with a new way of answering *that* question, because it's really about, as you said, the administration of a democratic system, and how do you allow people to make claims or modulate claims on public funds among various groups? If you leave aside the administrative piece, one other alternative is to simply resist the need to establish group identities at all.

I guess the question I always wonder is, why can we not deal with self-identification, which it seems to

me that the notion of multiple box checking reflects? People want to define themselves rather than have to be defined by a system. The question becomes, how do you maintain that aspect of a democratic process, but still deal with the administration of the system in the ways that you've been talking about?

Prewitt: I hope you don't think I know the answer to that question. It's the key question. Absolutely, the key question. The starting was part of it already. In our own measurement system, race is what you want it to be. You get the questionnaire, you can put on whatever you want to. So it's self-identification.

The question is, how many categories? There are 281 million people in the United States. Maybe there should be 281 million categories, which would mean no categories.

You see, I would make the following political observation. We now have a situation in which the number of categories is too few to accommodate people's concern for identification, membership, and so forth. That's why there will be a proliferation. The pressures will be intense to add categories. But it's too many to administer an old set of rules written in 1960 around four categories.

Anything that is both too many and too few is unstable. Something has got to give. I think what has to give is not identification. I just think that will proliferate. If the Chaldeans want to be collected or counted independently, we'll count them independently. If the Arab-Americans want to be counted independently, we'll count them.

By the way, you add one more category, and you go from a hundred twenty-six to two hundred fifty-five, because everything interacts with everything else. So the categories just… In no time, you're over a thousand different categories. Which, of course, you should! There are at least a thousand different specialized different kind of groupings in our society. Whatever race means.

If you sustain a measurement system, it will proliferate, but it no longer functions. You're absolutely right. The key question is, how do you then administer? Well, you probably create laws. This is why it's very interesting.

The old politics of redistribution were about resources. Money! Access! They weren't about social recognition. You could go back to the politics of redistribution, in which the key issues are who's poor and who's not poor, not who's black and who's white, et cetera, et cetera.

Audience: I'm from the State of Louisiana, which is a state that works on a basis of communities, and how the different communities interact with one another as communities, and they have very specific kinds of identities, as opposed to individual.

Something happened in the Census that said there were less Cajuns. I wonder what boxes got left out, because we happen to know that we have just as many Cajun communities as we always had. Is there some kind of dysfunction that doesn't allow people to do what they used to do? I mean, you used to be able to count Cajuns a lot better in the Census. Now somehow they've all disappeared from Louisiana! Do you know what might have happened?

Prewitt: It's a very fair question, but unfortunately, I don't know the answer. At different times, the Census questionnaire has been written differently. We had this in New York, by the way. We "lost" a lot of Haitians and Dominican Republicans.

You sometimes, in a Census questionnaire, write down some examples. It turns out that whatever you put into the example list that year gets a spike in its count, and if you take it out of the list of examples, it begins to disappear. People see this thing and say, "Well, I guess I am," and they mark that, and so forth.

But Cajun, I don't have a sense. I would have thought Cajun was probably not on the short form but is on the longer form, and those data aren't out yet. So I don't know how we would have even had a count of Cajuns as early as now. I wouldn't worry too much about it. You may be comparing it with something else.

But no, look, what are the categories, what do these categories mean?

I was going to put an overhead up, but I was afraid many of you couldn't see it. It's how the race question has been asked since 1790. Every census, we changed how we asked the race question. Every census, from 1790 to 2000.

In 1790, we asked how old you are, and we asked whether you are a man or a woman. That question didn't change from 1790 to 2000. Exactly the same way, because it has some sort of objective reality.

But you changed the racial measurement because you had new politics of race all of the time. After the Civil War, we tried to put in a question on quadroon and octoroon, the old one-drop stuff.

There was a time we put in the Census, Hindus. It was a Census question. Mexicans were put in the Census in 1930 as a race category, and the Mexican government was so furious, because they thought all Mexicans are white, therefore you can't have it as a separate race category, so we took it off the Census, brought it back in in 1970 as ethnicity.

The politics of what actually gets measured around race and ethnicity is the most intense politics of any politics that surround the Census. Actually, it matters. They're intense because it has consequences.

I'm sorry I don't know about the Cajun, but I can tell you that stuff comes and goes because of political movements, not because there's some objective reality out there. That's why we still count people's ages the same way we did in 1790. There may someday be a politics of age that may make it more complicated, but I won't get into gender.

Audience: You've talked a lot about the new rules for this democracy based on race, but what about the role of income? You touched on it just briefly, but if you could explore that a bit more? Clearly the political parties are looking at income gap, and how to approach that from a political perspective. Can you talk about the intersection between the two?

Prewitt: Surely. The question, if you didn't hear it had to do with the fact that our politics are not just organized around race and ethnic identities, of course, they're primarily based around and historically been organized around income differentials, labor, non-labor, and so forth. Where is all of that?

That is still alive and well. In some respects, what we did after the 1960 period was to superimpose upon the old politics of income and redistribution. You superimposed upon that a politics of recognition. The recognition politics were also about resources, as the first question indicated.

There are public benefits. The United States federal government spends about $200 billion a year based upon Census-derived formulae. That's a very large number. That's medical care, that's transportation, that's housing allowances, that's education, all based on Census categories.

The private sector, including your corporation asks itself, I'm sure, "How many of our traders have the following kind of racial background? Well, we're not as diverse as we ought to be."

How do you know you're not as diverse as you ought to be? You compare yourself to the Census categories. Maybe you're more refined; you compare age and education and so forth and so on. We have all in this room been part of that for the last thirty or forty years, this notion of statistical proportionality. Statistical proportionality, back in the old politics of the 1920s and 30s, was more about income distributions.

I think that will come back. I think we will get a stronger politics of redistribution, and we will retain some sort of feel for identity and recognition, but not as a mechanism of administering social benefits.

What does that mean, however, for affirmative action? What does that mean for quota systems? What does that mean for the kinds of stuff we've all been doing in our organizations for the last twenty or thirty years? But then, what is an African-American? Are the Somalis African-American? Well, yes and no. Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. You know these conundrums as well as I do.

So, yes, you're going to certainly have a politics, but the politics, in my guess, will become more focused upon allocation of resources.

Audience: Up to this moment, there's been no real mention of the other thing we're always asked on Census, which is, married or single, and in terms of our marital status, and to a degree, sexual orientation. I'm wondering in that regard, if you could comment on whether census taking follows or leads social policy, and who gets to make that determination?

Prewitt: Surely. Every question that is asked in a Census is there because it relates back to some government program, government agency. There's some use for it. Marital status is used that way.

The Census Bureau itself would prefer to have a bit more leeway and actually try to create some questions which we thought would be just in the public good. If you think of information as a public good, the Census Bureau, after all, produces enormous amounts of public information. So we would actually

prefer to ask some questions that we're not allowed to ask. Better ancestry questions, for example, both where were your parents born and where were your grandparents born, would be very rich data.

The question on sexual orientation, we actually tried in Census 2000 to get to that a little bit by recognizing single-sex unmarried people in a household. We created that category for the first time in 2000, so there's now a count of that. That's not quite the same thing as sexual orientation, but it is a better count than we've ever had. That was not pre-negotiated with the Congress. I'm not sure, if we pre-negotiated it, we could have managed to do it. But it was simply the way we combined the data.

Marital status, by the way, a little vignette on that. I won't go into the difference in the long form and the short form, but they're different, and there's a reason that they are what they are.

In 2000, we wanted to keep the short form as simple as possible. We used to have marital status on the short form, and we put it on the long form. Short form data allow you to make statements at the block level. The reason you make some statements at the block level is because that's how you draw voting districts. Everything that's on the long form allows you to make statements down to the census track level, which is about five or six thousand people, which for all practical purposes is adequate.

Okay, so we thought it was easier. We don't need to know the marital status of people at the block level. Knowing at the census track level is perfectly all right for all kinds of marketing or public policy analyses and so forth.

Jesse Helms, on the floor of the Senate, introduced a Sense of the Senate Resolution saying that the Census Bureau, because it took marital status off the short form and put it on the long form, was anti-family. athe reason that it left the race question on the short form was because it wants to create social categories, it wanted to create a race-based set of social policies.

Senator Helms put that up as a Sense of the Senate Resolution. It passed 94-0. It makes you anxious about the quality of public discourse. Very interesting. Ted Kennedy and Pat Moynihan, people like that, had to vote for it, because you can't get ninety-four votes any other way.

Nobody believed that we were anti-family. And race is on the short form because you need it to administer the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But it plays out. So there are a lot of symbolic politics that get connected to this, as well. If we ever really started talking measuring sexual orientation on the Census…

By the way, no religious question. Not since 1790. Never, ever asked religion in the Census. And that's because of a very deep commitment of the separation of church and state. We're not going to go out and find out who we are religiously.

But at the same time, we put race in. If you actually think about that for a moment, how different would American history have been if, in 1790, we had not put on a race question, and we had put on a religion question? Or we put neither of them on. Different American history, maybe. But that's a different story.

Thanks.

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