

A Word With You

ALL of a sudden I feel hemmed in with *numbers*. It's been happening gradually, of course, but now it has reached a critical point.

My Army serial number was 3253-0372, and my G.I. insurance, V-2092-627. My voter's registration number is C-60504, and my social security number is 094-14-0897. My savings account is designated by the comfortable figure, 37,154—all out of proportion to its meager contents; and my checking account, still more disproportionately, sports a whopping 0210-0012-053-502345.

The post office now requires you to put zone numbers on your letters, in addition to numbered houses on numbered streets and avenues. In the good old days it was enough to say "next door but one to St. Martin's Church on Whitby Lane."

And now the numbers are sweeping through the telephone system. Every city has its number which you can dial direct, and new telephone exchanges are no longer colorful names, but numbers. I suppose it's only a matter of time until they'll do away with our "Rhinelander," with its visions of Rhine maidens and Rhine wine. Every telephone will eventually have a minimum of ten numbers. And organizations are now assigning separate phone numbers to each employee.

All in the name of efficiency and better service. Boo! I've just been through a harrowing experience dialing ten numbers. Clicks and buzzes

and an operator's voice telling me I didn't do the right thing. When I asked for help I was given seven other numbers to dial for information. After a few more whirligigs, I got a party who answered "Project Hope." Hopelessly I gave it up.

And don't tell me we're getting any better postal service, or banking service, or anything, with this new numbers game.

I have a few oases in this desert of numbers. My membership cards in the Henry George School, the Art Students League and the Jackson Heights Public Library are blessedly unnumbered. But don't think you're getting away from numbers in the field of culture. If you ask about culture in America, you'll get a ton of statistics on your head: there are 1,037 orchestras, 963 art museums and \$2,300,000 for a Rembrandt. Religion? You'll get more statistics about the number of people going to church. (They're only going in order to play bingo—more numbers!)

If you ask why all these numbers, you'll be answered with another number: "Because this is 1962."

Don't get me wrong. I like numbers; I think they're great. I just don't like *them* telling me what to do. I think they should stay in their proper place, with me giving the orders. "The question is," as Humpty Dumpty said, "who's to be master, that's all."

—Robert Clancy

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The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York 21, N.Y., supports the following principle:

The community, by its presence and activity, gives rental value to land, therefore the rent of land belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community—known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

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