Vermont and Connecticut base their representatives in the lower House on townships. Representation in the Senate is based on the counties.

We could go on recording state after state; in the overwhelming majority one House or both are set up so that political units rather than people are accorded major recognition in the legislatures.

By contrast, the lack of balance in the United States Senate—where New York has 92 times the population of Nevada but each state gets two Senate seats—is almost trivial. In California and Connecticut, for example, the vote of a resident of the smallest legislative district is worth 300 times the vote of a citizen who lives in the largest.

There is no logical justification for this outrageous distortion of the concept of representative government. Why should a sparsely populated county made up mostly of sagebrush or pastureland share equal voting rights with another, containing hundreds of thousands of people?

If representation based on townships and counties had some justification 100 years ago—when most of the population was rural and widely dispersed—there can be none today.

Any significance the county may have had in the day of the birchbark canoe or the covered wagon has dwindled in the age of the jet plane and the atom bomb. Besides, our American political system never conferred "sovereign" powers on the counties, such as were enjoyed by the 13 original sovereign states. There is no parallel in history or in function that can justify a status for the county in the structure of State government comparable to the role of the state in the government of the United States!

They Stop Counting People

But the worst shame of the states is the refusal of the legislatures to reapportion seats according to population changes *even* when the Constitution requires that they do so.

In most of the states representation in at least one House is supposed to reflect population in some degree, as we have seen.

In 42 states the constitutions hold the legislators themselves responsible to reapportion legislative seats generally every 10 years, after the Federal Census is conducted. Yet in state after state, as the movement toward the cities has gained momentum, the dominantly rural legislators have refused to act. (See table on this page.)

Perhaps it was too much to entrust this responsibility to them, since the action inevitably would remove many from their jobs. But even the courts have refused to compel compliance with the clear language of the state constitutions. Both state and federal judges have regularly ruled that they are without power since reapportionment is a "political" and not a "judicial" question.

As a consequence, only 19 state legislatures have gotten around to reapportioning one or both Houses since the Census of 1940. Connecticut last established its number of state representatives in 1818 and state senators in 1903. Mississippi's last reapportionment was in 1890, Illinois' and Alabama's in 1901. Most have not reapportioned for over ten, twenty, or thirty years.

Refusal of legislatures to reapportion ensures rotten borough control over the entire legislature. While the ideal of equal representation may already be stultified in one House, because it is based on area representation, the same effect is achieved in the other House as well by a refusal to reassign representation based on new population shifts.

In the Michigan upper House, the Senators from the five largest districts represent areas with a population of 2,432,743; the five smallest, 400,823. But even in the lower House, the disparity is now almost as great—577,617 against 141,480.

Here's how Iowa (last reapportionment: Senate 1928, House 1904) practices "equal" representation: Five urban counties with a combined population of 635,000 elect 5 Senators; 20 rural counties with 627,000 people elect 20. In the lower House the 10 representatives from the 5 urban counties are outvoted almost five to one by the 46 representatives from the rural counties.

Dates of Last Reapportionments of State Legislatures, by House

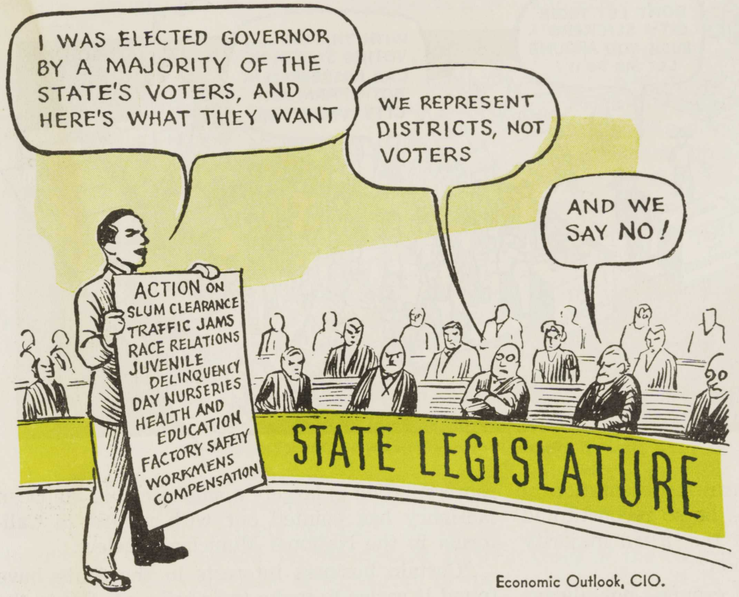
States	Senate	House
1900 Census or before—8 States		
Alabama	1901	1901
Connecticut	1903	1818
Delaware	1897	1897
Illinois	1901	1901
Iowa	1928	1904
Mississippi	1890	1890
Oklahoma	1908	1941
Tennessee	1905	1905
1910 Census—last for one or both Houses—1 State		
Minnesota	1913	1913
1920 Census—last for one or both Houses—7 States		
Indiana	1921	1921
Kansas	1923	1943
Louisiana	1921	1921
Maryland	1922	1922
Michigan	1925	1943
Montana	1921	1941 (1)
Pennsylvania	1921	1921
1930 Census—last for one or both Houses—12 States		
Arizona	1932	1932
Arkansas	1936	1936
Colorado	1933	1933
Nebraska	1934	1934
North Dakota	1931	1931
Oregon	1933	1931
Rhode Island	1930	1930
South Carolina	1932	1932
Washington	1931	1931
West Virginia	1937	1933
Wisconsin	1931	1931
Wyoming	1933	1933
1940 Census—last for one or both Houses—17 States		
California	1941	1941
Florida	1945	1945
Georgia	1946	1951
Idaho	.....	1941
Kentucky	1942	1942
Maine	1941	1941
Massachusetts	1947	1948
Missouri	1945	1945
Nevada	1947	1947
New Hampshire	.....	1943
New Jersey	1947	1947
New Mexico	1949	1949
New York	1943	1943
North Carolina	1941	1941
South Dakota	1947	1947
Vermont	1941	(2)
Virginia	1948	1948
1950 Census—last for one or both Houses—3 States		
Ohio	1951	1951
Texas	1951	1951
Utah	1951	1951

Source: Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library and Citizens Bureau Questionnaire, March 1952.

(1) Council of State Governments gives last date for Montana—House–1951.

(2) Each town and city has one representative according to State Constitution.

Note: The fact that a reapportionment was carried out recently by no means indicates that equal representation among the citizens of the state has been fully achieved.



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Even Nebraska, which so hopefully adopted a one-house "model" state legislature a few years ago allows one representative for 17,936 rural citizens as against an average of one for 40,145 city people in Omaha's populous Douglas County. (Nebraska last reapportioned in 1934.)

In state after state enlightened Governors have been elected by overwhelming majorities after promising to initiate critically needed programs in the field of housing, education, social insurance or tax reform. And time after time the people's will has been frustrated by the minority stranglehold over one or both Houses of the State Legislature.

Why Progress Stops at the State Line

Is there any wonder why, for the solution of so many vital issues, millions of Americans must look to their federal government instead of the capitols of their states?

While the United States Congress by no means reflects equal representation, its composition is still far more responsive to the needs of America's urban millions than the minority-dominated legislative bodies of most of the 48 states.

Even though modern-day problems increasingly require national leadership in this age of industrial inter-dependence, there is ample scope for constructive action within the states on many issues, if state governments do not default their responsibilities.[3]

Problems like slum clearance, urban traffic congestion, race relations, juvenile delinquency, day nurseries to aid working mothers, health and education, factory safety, workmen's compensation and a score of others plague city people but are often unknown in rural areas. Without adequate funds and state cooperation, cities are powerless to solve these problems unaided. Yet, the rurally dominated legislatures—unfamiliar or unsympathetic to them—too often do little or nothing to help.

Is further intervention by the Federal Govern-

[3] See "States' Rights: How Far Do They Go" *CIO Economic Outlook* July-August 1952.