Other new questions included one on ownership of vacation homes. Forest industries, forest-product companies and agencies concerned with recreation will be greatly interested in the answers.

However, most of the questions for 1971 had been asked in the 1961 and earlier censuses. Indeed, some had been included in Canadian censuses since 1871.

At one time it was important to know the number of illiterates in Canada. With the coming of universal education, the illiteracy question asked in the earlier censuses was dropped after the 1931 census.

FOSDIC Goes to Work

A lot of work went into making the 1971 questionnaires as easy as possible to answer.

For example, apart from names, addresses, and phone numbers, most questions could be answered by using a black pencil (and even the pencil was supplied) to fill in a circle, like this -- "●".

Besides making it easier to fill in the questionnaire, this method made it easier to process the returns.

The first result of the 1971 census was paper -- millions of questionnaires, tons of paper. If it had not been for some amazing new machines, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (now Statistics Canada) would have been smothered by paper work.

Instead, the paper was quickly processed into compact rolls of film. Every questionnaire was microfilmed by high-speed automatic cameras. Each roll of film recorded about 1,800 questionnaires.

The microfilm was then fed to FOSDIC (Film Optical Sensing Device for Input to Computers). This machine -- developed especially for census work -- can "read" the filled-in dots, which now are only tiny transparent specks on the negative microfilm.

At the rate of up to 500 questionnaire pages a minute, FOSDIC converts the census facts into electronic impulses on magnetic tape.

Using the Computer

The magnetic tapes produced by FOSDIC then feed into the computer's memory bank. Here the millions of facts about Canadians and how they live and work are tallied in large aggregate statistics.

Because of the advance of computer technology, this stored information can be organized and retrieved in a great variety of different tabulations.