

INCREASE IS SHOWN IN NEGRO ADOPTIONS

Spence-Chapin Spurs Drive by Concessions to 'Economic Realities' of Racial Life

A baby girl named Kathy, healthy and intelligent and with delicate features, found a mother and father last week through the Spence-Chapin Adoption Service. In a world where couples seeking babies for adoption far outnumber the supply Kathy had to wait thirteen months because her skin was too dark.

Kathy is a Negro baby, and there are never enough Negro applicants on adoption agency lists. Moreover, even those who apply show a preference for lighter-skinned Negro babies, hoping the children will face less social and

economic hostility as they grow up.

Tells Leaders of Its Needs

The latest step in Spence-Chapin's campaign to attract Negro adoptive parents took place Friday. The agency's interracial Committee to Develop Adoption Resources told its needs to fifty Negro community leaders gathered at the home of Mrs. Henry Steeger at 1060 Fifth Avenue.

Social workers say that for every ten homeless Negro children, only one couple is seeking to adopt. Yet census figures show there are six childless Negro couples for each Negro waif.

But for Kathy and other Negro babies on the Spence-Chapin rolls 1952 has brought notable progress in the agency's interracial program, which started four years ago.

In the last four months seventeen of the sixty babies Spence-Chapin placed for adoption were Negro. This was 28 per cent of the total. Before 1949 almost none was Negro and in the last three

years the percentage was only 10 or 11 per cent. In 1951, when Spence-Chapin reached a peak of 217 adoptions, only twenty-four were of Negro babies. This year's figure has brought the total to seventy-three out of 581 adoptions arranged since the interracial program began.

Miss Dorothea P. Coe, executive director of Spence-Chapin, and other staff members recognize that the scarcity of Negro applicants has both economic and psychological roots. Negro couples, they say, may not feel financially secure enough to adopt until they have reached a relatively advanced age. There is more likelihood that the wife as well as the husband must work, and greater fear of being "laid off" from jobs.

In addition, they may fear a "brush-off" from an agency that has been traditionally "white." As Miss Coe put it, "for so many decades we haven't allowed them to use our American institutions, it's no wonder they are hesitant now."

The Spence-Chapin interracial

program began in earnest with the hiring in 1948 of Miss Bernice Daniels, a Negro social worker who had had long experience with the Community Service Society and the Children's Aid Society.

Increases Negro Employees

Since then Negro staff members have increased to four case workers out of a total of twelve, and two clerical workers. All case workers handle both white and Negro couples. Four of the thirty members on the board of directors are Negro. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and Mrs. Jackie Robinson are co-chairmen of a special sponsoring committee.

Spence-Chapin has made some concessions to the "economic realities" of Negro life. It has raised the applicant's age limit to 40 for women and 45 for men, compared with 37 and 42 for white couples.

Though the agency normally considers \$3,000 a minimum family income for adoption, it has made exceptions when other fac-

tors were favorable. It breaks up its adoption fee, including attorney's services, into four installments. This fee ranges from \$75 for a \$3,000 annual income to \$1,000 for an income of \$15,000 or more. Most of Spence-Chapin's adoptive couples, white and Negro, pay fees of \$200 to \$350 because their incomes are between \$4,000 and \$6,000.

So far the agency has not drawn as many applicants from Negro professional persons as it had hoped for. Many more of its placements have been among Negroes with civil service office jobs, transportation workers, or other white-collar or skilled-labor employes.