DURING the past quarter century, many changes have occurred in adoption practice in this country. Unfortunately, the placement of children of minority groups, racially mixed children, or seriously handicapped children—the so-called “hard to place”—has failed to keep up with this trend. This lack of placement is particularly true of black infants and children. It is estimated that between 20,000 and 60,000 children of black and racially mixed background are presently in need of adoptive homes or some other type of permanent placement.

In this statement, the Committee on Adoptions and Dependent Care of the American Academy of Pediatrics will review the established methods of providing homes for black children. The Committee urges improvement of these methods and the development of newer and more vigorous approaches for placing these children.

MORE BLACK, ADOPTIVE PARENTS
The primary need is to increase the number of black adoptive parents, which would result in an increase in the number of adoptive homes for black children. The cooperative efforts of individuals, community groups, (especially churches), social agencies, and government resources will be needed to accomplish this.

Publicity is essential to create an awareness of the problem and to provide knowledge of the procedural steps required for adoption. Social agencies should guide prospective adoptive couples through the difficult phase of application, and decrease the investigative period to a necessary minimum. Studies have shown that family income is the major factor (over and above previously considered motivations) in the difference between the percentage of black and white couples adopting children. Better opportunities in jobs, education, and housing for black people are necessary to break the low income cycle. Government-subsidized adoptions should be continued on a larger scale. Where possible, subsidies should provide services, rather than direct money grants.

ALTERNATE SOLUTIONS

Single-Parent Adoptions
Single-parent adoption, though not ideal, is one alternative to conventional adoption by married couples. However, single-parent adoption should be considered only if there is no reasonable prospect of placement in a two-parent home. At the present time, the need for homes for children of minority races is great; and this alternative should be acceptable if a warm, stable, highly motivated, single parent can be found.

Transracial Adoptions
Transracial placements have also been made in an effort to extend the opportunity for adoption to children who might not otherwise have a home. Again, this is an alternative which is not as desirable as placement in a home with parents of the same racial background. In transracial placement, parents must be carefully selected and must be able to project their feelings beyond the child's infancy to his adolescence and adulthood. They must have an understanding of the development of identity in the child and an appreciation of the pressures that may develop as a result of community attitudes when parents and child are of different racial groups.

Foster Home Care
A foster home is the bridge between the institution and an adoptive home. Increased payment for foster home care would in-
crease the number and improve the quality of available homes. Permanent foster care for children who cannot be adopted (for legal or other reasons) would diminish the emotional maladjustment associated with frequent family changes. The concept of permanent foster home care should be fully developed, with effort directed toward discovering, upgrading, supervising, and subsidizing foster homes.

Quasi-Institutional Care

Unfortunately, institutional care is still necessary for some children. However, it should be reserved for children with serious emotional and physical disabilities. A quasi-communal setting can be achieved within the institution by the use of small groups which are kept intact as much as possible over a prolonged period of time. There is a salutary effect in living with the same people, of striving for a common goal. The group home provides a similar opportunity.

CONCLUSION

The large number of black children needing adoptive homes is an urgent problem of our time. Though an immediate solution may not be available, a vigorous, cooperative effort will assure that each child waiting will be provided a secure and loving home. The welfare of the child remains the primary consideration when selecting a home.

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