

More children are being put up for adoption, including the offspring of young married couples who feel financially or emotionally unprepared.

Agencies have also broadened their concept of what constitutes an adoptable child. They are now gently directing the attention of applicants to the boy with a clubfoot, or the girl whose handicap is being school age instead of newborn, interracial instead of white.

If parents do not insist on the medically sound, 100% white, brand-new infant, agencies say, the opportunities to adopt improve dramatically.

Despite the narrowed parent gay, there are enough eager couples available for the "perfect babies." But the competition thins around the physically, mentally, racially or chronologically handicapped child.

Black and Gray Markets

An important result of these more realistic, less arbitrary standards has been a decline in the black and gray markets.

Agencies supervised 52% of nonrelative adoptions in 1951, 64% in 1962. This is a 12% drop in the number of couples buying infants for cash from unscrupulous "baby brokers," or acquiring them without undue compensation through the well meaning but frequently risky intercession of a doctor or lawyer.

"As these changes become more widely known to adoptive parents seeking children," said Mrs. Oettinger, commenting on the greater flexibility in adoption procedures, "we believe and hope there will be an even more striking increase in the number of prospective adoptive parents who seek the protection of social agencies."

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MEDICINE

Fingerprints of Newborn Could Aid Disease Study

► THE FINGERPRINTS of newborn babies, now taken in hospitals for identification purposes, may be studied in the future as a means of early detection of neurological abnormalities.

There is already evidence that Mongolism is associated with palm and fingerprint abnormalities, and studies are being made to find out if wider application can be made with this new diagnosis.

In Virginia, palm and fingerprints of about 5,000 patients in the Lynchburg Training School and Hospital, the Petersburg Training School and the Central State Hospital, also in Petersburg, are being taken to determine how the patterns of these prints differ among those with no known abnormality and others with different kinds.

The study is being undertaken by the U.S. Public Health Service's Neurological and Sensory Disease Service Program. Dr. Fred Rosner, program epidemiologist, says unusual patterns already have been reported in the medical literature in patients with organic brain syndrome, neuroses, schizophrenia and other conditions.

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Nature Note

Soybeans

► CONSIDERED one of the most important pod-bearing crops of the world, the erect, bushy-branched soybean has a long history.

It was cultivated for over 4,000 years in Japan and China, where it was often called "the cow of China" because it took the place of milk in the Chinese diet.

Also known as "soja bean" or "soya bean," this plant was first introduced into the United States by a Yankee ship's captain, and grown in Pennsylvania in 1804.

The Perry expedition to Japan in 1854 brought back two more varieties of this hardy bean, which was then also named the Japan pea.

In the last 50 years, cultivation of this high-protein, high-oil plant has gradually increased until it has become one of the leading cash seed crops in the United States and Canada—a phenomenal development, unequalled in American agriculture.

The plant is an erect bean, growing from one to six feet high, with many green leaves. From one to five seeds, shaped like large peas, form in the long pods. These seeds may be yellow, green, brown, black or combinations of all these colors. They are rich in protein and oil, which is used in shortening, margarine, salad oil, paints, soaps, adhesives, paper, rubber floor tile, textiles, gasoline, candy bars, cereals and even Christmas tree decorations.

The meal left after oil extraction makes feed for hogs, dairy and beef cattle, sheep, poultry, dogs, foxes and furbearing animals. The stalks are often used for hay and forage, although they are also plowed under the soil where they add valuable nutrients.

The bean grows in nearly all types of soil where it has adequate water, but it does especially well on fertile or sandy loams.

• Science News Letter, 86:263 December 5, 1964

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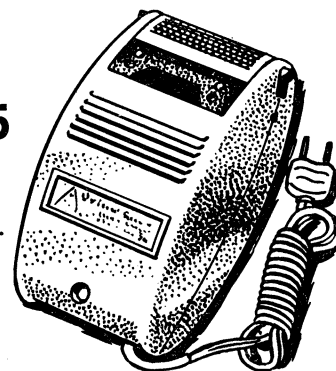
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