

## ELDERLY NEGROES PRESENT DEMANDS

Meeting Seeks Recognition  
at White House Parley

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 13—A group of 700 elderly Negroes gathered here this week in an effort to focus national attention on their problems.

According to leaders of the National Caucus on the Black Aged, which sponsored the meeting, the gathering was called to insure that the Negro elderly are not forgotten at the White House Conference on Aging, which will be held later this month.

They insisted however, that they were not protesting against the White House conference, and a proposal to call their meeting the Black House Conference on Aging was rejected as too divisive.

But as the group assembled in the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church here and shared experiences of what life is like for an American who is black, poor and old, its criticisms and demands grew bolder and broader.

"We need a guaranteed annual income of \$6,500 for single folk and \$9,000 for couples," an elderly Negro man said.

### Headed for White House

At the end of the two-day conference yesterday, a busload of participants headed for the White House with a list of demands for President Nixon, including a guaranteed income, more extensive Medicare coverage, removal of the income ceiling for some Social Security recipients, and an end to the war in Vietnam.

If the President fails to encourage appropriate legislation along those lines, the group said, he should consider their ultimatum an "eviction notice from our White House."

The participants returned to the church after the United States park police turned them away from the White House.

Mrs. Fannie Jefferson, the 72-year-old moderator of the conference, who was arrested at the White House when she went through a gate and refused to leave, had set the meeting's theme at a news conference Thursday.

"As blacks, we were born into America with one strike against us," she said. "And now that we're old and poor, we have three strikes against us."

In a discussion of the financial problems facing elderly Negroes, Dr. Inabel Lindsay, retired dean of the Howard University School of Social Work, told the meeting: "I submit to you the impossibility of planning for a future when you have no way to support the present."

Contending that "income is the basis of all our needs—health care, housing, transportation, etc.," Dr. Lindsay listed census statistics showing that about 50 per cent of elderly blacks live in poverty, compared with 23 per cent of the white elderly population.

She also cited census data to emphasize that the average age at death for a white male who is now over 55 is 68, while the Negro male in the same age group is likely to be dead by 61.

"The average black man doesn't even live long enough to collect his Social Security," she said.

In recommending that the age of eligibility for benefits be lowered for Negroes according to life expectancy, she said she was "seeking no preferential treatment, only equity."

Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president emeritus of Morehouse College and now president of the Atlanta Board of Education, underlined what he characterized as a hard reality for elderly Negroes.

"It has always been assumed that blacks need less and can get along on less than white people," Dr. Mays said in his keynote address. "When it comes to the black man, the national will and national commitment are not there. The black people are the invisible people in the United States and the black aged is still less visible."

Hobart Jackson, chairman of the National Caucus on the Black Aged, was asked why, in the light of Federal legislation prohibiting racial discrimination, older blacks suffered injustices that older whites did not find themselves subjected to.

"Sure there are laws," he responded, "but you have to have test cases if laws are to be enforced — and the elderly black person needs services, not test cases."

Asked about the White House conference, Mr. Jackson, who is himself a delegate to it, said, "Our hopes for it are real, but we are by no means sanguine or confident that it will serve our needs."

He said he was encouraged that about 350 of the 3,500 delegates would be Negro — representing a proportion roughly equal to their ratio in the total population—but said he thought the difficulties of the black elderly warranted higher representation.