



Spencer Tracy happily welcomes Sidney Poitier, brought home by his daughter (Katharine Houghton), only to learn that she wants to marry him.

Interracial Marriage Subject for Film

"There's no problem," the beautiful white-girl confidently assures her handsome fiance — a Negro — as she takes him home to meet her parents, both known for their liberal views.

There is a problem, as it turns out in "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," but nothing compared to the problem the film itself faces: is the American public ready for a motion picture that treats racial intermarriage not only sympathetically but comically as well?

If such a film can succeed now, it will be this one — because of its audience-attracting cast if for nothing else. Sidney Poitier, who this year has become one of the movie industry's leading box-office names, is the fiance, and the mother and father of the girl are Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy in the last of a long line of films they made together. (Tracy died last June, a few weeks after completing the film.) And Miss Hepburn's niece, a newcomer named Katharine Houghton, is the girl.

"People say the story's a shocker," Miss Hepburn remarked, "but I'm the last one to ask about that. Even anybody with a pint-sized brain knows the day is coming when interracial marriage won't be funny or surprising or anything else. It will be just 'there it is.' It's a defenseless position, to judge people by their color. Sidney Poitier is black, but he and Kathy (Miss Houghton) don't look out together at all. I'm spotted (referring to her freckles), he's black, she's white, so . . . ?"

But in the film, the announcement that the young couple plan to marry is taken anything

but casually by Hepburn and Tracy, who in the film is a liberal newspaper publisher. The plot — which covers a period of 12 hours, is completed by the fact that the parents of the girl are given only that much time to express their approval or disapproval of the marriage. Poitier, it is revealed, has decided there will be no marriage unless the couple has her parents' blessing — a moment of truth that puts their long-held beliefs to a test.

Producer-director Stanley Kramer has, in addition, added a number of almost unbelievable plot turns — for both comedy and suspense — the couple have known each other only 10 days and they have planned to leave that night for Switzerland, where he will be working and where they will be married within the next few weeks.

"She is just the way we brought her up to be," Hepburn says to Tracy while they are mulling the decision they must make. "We told her it was wrong to believe that the white people were somehow essentially superior to the black people or the brown or the red or the yellow ones, for that matter. People who thought that way were wrong to think that way — sometimes hateful, usually stupid, but always — always wrong. That's what we said. And when we said it we did not add, 'But don't ever fall in love with a colored man.'"

Tracy, until the film's almost abrupt ending, is adjusting to a Negro, although he insists, "I'm thinking only of (her) welfare. I have nothing against him personally, but he's a grown man and he behaved irresponsibly in the first place by letting

this thing happen. Now he wants me to be happy about a situation when I happen to know that they'll both get their brains knocked out."

Interestingly, it is a 70-year-old Irish-born monsignor — a longtime friend of the family — who prods Tracy about the latter's "phony liberal facade," telling the young couple that "you two make me feel extraordinarily happy," and assuring the parents:

"I've known a good many cases of marriage between races in my time. And strangely enough, they usually work out quite well. I don't know why. Maybe because it requires some special quality of effort, more consideration and compassion than most marriages seem to generate these days. Could that be it?"

Although the film contains some harsh language and one obscenity never uttered on the screen before, the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures did not hesitate in approving the film for adolescents on up ("the language is sometimes strong and seems out of place in a comedy of this type, but it is reserved for moments of strong feeling"), and observing that "Kramer deserves credit for having the courage to confront this delicate (racial) problem, especially in a comedy."

(Catholic Press Features)

Recent Film Ratings

Following are the titles of films reviewed this week by the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures.

- Class A, Section 1
Half a Sixpence
- Class A, Section 2
Blackbeard's Ghost
Observation: The plot resolution of this fantasy, preposterous though it be, is based on the unethical proposition that the end justifies the means.
- Speedway
- Class A, Section 3
Doctor Faustus
Will Penny
- Class A, Section 4
The Uninhibited

Observation: The theme of this film (the kindling of direction and responsibility in exiles from life) has merit but its execution is flawed. As a result, its amoral setting and some of its treatment may prove offensive.

Class B
Poor Cow

Objection: Although there is undeniable power and poignancy in this study of English slum dwellers, unfortunately several exotic sequences in their excess give every appearance of aiming at achieving audience titillation rather than dramatic integrity.

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T R A V E L

CIC Schedules FIGHT Leader For March 3 Talk

DeLeon McEwen, Jr., president of FIGHT, Rochester's Negro community organization, will address members of the Catholic Interracial Council (CIC) next Sunday, March 3, to the CIC group at 4 p.m. in Immaculate Conception School Hall, according to Mrs. William R. Plotter, president.

The Catholic Interracial Council was one of the founding groups when FIGHT was established in Rochester in 1965.

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The Family Rosary for Peace program is broadcast each evening at 7 p.m. by Rochester radio station WSAY, WMBQ-FM in Auburn, television cable companies Channel 5 in Hornell, Channel 6 in Auburn, Channel 8 in Elmira and 88.75 in Corning. Those who will lead in recitation of the Rosary this week will be:

Friday, March 1 — Joseph Ewanietz, St. Helen's, accompanied by the Kolping Society.

Saturday, March 2—Mass will be celebrated.

Sunday, March 3—John Bittner, Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Monday, March 4 — Frank Wolfe, St. Thomas More.

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