

among pregnant women, the fear complex will in future assume progressively less importance. The Committee believes that increasing attention is being paid to these aspects by the medical profession.

As to the bearing of this matter on the subject of abortion, several witnesses, among whom were two obstetricians of wide experience, expressed the opinion that, while fear of pregnancy and labour is rare, fear of infection following abortion is a factor the recognition of which is becoming more general.

The Committee is of opinion that fear of labour is not a major factor, and this opinion is supported by many witnesses.

Ill health was alleged as a cause in a few instances, but it would appear that, in spite of the ambiguous state of the law, no genuine case of ill health need resort to abortion by clandestine methods. This is referred to in greater detail elsewhere.

(3) PREGNANCY IN THE UNMARRIED.

While this constitutes only a small part of the general problem of abortion, it is, nevertheless, a matter of great importance, and one which merits the closest study. Undoubtedly the general attitude towards the unmarried mother to-day is kinder and more tolerant than was formerly the case, but the fact remains that the single girl who determines to face the world with her child may find herself subject to unreasonable and unnecessary cruelty and injustice. Excellent work in assisting the single mother is done by various religious and charitable organizations, and where a girl is driven to the abortionist this is more likely to be due to fear of social ostracism than to lack of ways and means of caring for the child.

Several witnesses mentioned ignorance of matters relating to sex as being frequently responsible for pregnancy in the unmarried. This is undoubtedly the case, and the responsibility of parents, guardians, and teachers in this matter is evident. The evil influence of drinking on young people was also stressed, medical and social workers being well aware of the importance of this factor. Alcohol consumption need not be excessive to undermine self-control and dull the moral sense.

(4) CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL OUTLOOK.

The Committee believes that, in the altered social outlook, particularly towards the rearing of large families, lies a very important cause for the present situation. This aspect of the matter is intimately interwoven with the economic considerations already set forth, but extends far beyond them.

The point of view of what we believe to be a very large body of women is illustrated by the following evidence, which is but one of many similar expressions of opinion heard by the Committee. This witness, speaking on behalf of a group with incomes of £300 to £400 per annum, stated :—

“On present incomes, not more than two or three children at the outside can be given educational and economic opportunities. It may be said that it is quite possible to mitigate to a quite tolerable degree the strain put upon the parents by the provision of (1) adequate wages for husbands, and (2) a system of domestic help for wives. With regard to (1) it is not probable within our lifetime that everybody will be guaranteed an income adequate to the needs of a family of, say, three children—‘needs’ as viewed by educated parents. The most sympathetic administration would have its hands full for many a year coping with the problem of helping those thousands of our people who have been just on or very near the bread-line. Those worst off hitherto need help first. A man earning between three and four hundred a year should not claim Government help to breed children, when there are such numbers of people living on a much lower wage. But it must be perfectly clear to each member of the Commission who figures the matter out that a salary of less than £400 will not enable more than two children to be given such chances of development as every parent reasonably desires. It is pertinent to ask here what is the average number of children in the families of the British middle class—which is mainly the stratum from which our legislators, rulers, and magistrates have been drawn. Do such people breed freely? Self-respecting parents prefer to do without such Government help as family allowances; but knowing the cost of training a child they claim the rights first, to decide how many children they will breed, and, secondly, to live themselves normally satisfied married lives. Few women, moreover, of average intelligence are to-day content to be breeding-machines, and their husbands support them in that attitude. With regard to domestic help, even were this, or nursing schools, or both, provided by the State, the responsibility