

failure at the outset. The use of defective methods owing to their comparative cheapness and the unnecessarily high cost of effective appliances are undoubtedly among the causes of such failure.

While it is not the function of this Committee to report upon the wider aspect of contraception, but to deal with it only in relation to the abortion problem, yet we would point out that the evidence given showed that, though contraception is widely practised, many of the methods used are unreliable, and not founded upon physiological knowledge, and that when they fail abortion is resorted to. Abortion is a delayed, dangerous, and unsatisfactory form of birth-control. It was stressed by some witnesses that many women have no idea of the risks to life and health involved in the procuring of abortion, a medical witness mentioning, among other evils, the tendency to spontaneous abortion arising from damage to the generative organs sustained at an initial induced abortion. Other witnesses, on the contrary, maintained that these risks are well known to the majority of women, but that when faced with an unwanted pregnancy they are willing to incur any risk. Fuller reference to these dangers appears in another section of the report.

(6) INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING.

The attention of the Committee was drawn to advertisements appearing in certain periodicals which, while openly advocating the use of various contraceptives, referred to restraint and self-control in deprecatory terms. Abortifacients were advertised in terms which, while equally offensive, were less obvious. Other advertisements set forth the contents of certain books on sex matters of a very undesirable nature. The language of these advertisements can only be described as obscene, and their possible effects on immature and inexperienced minds can well be imagined.

A reprehensible practice is that of certain so-called "mail order chemists," who send out price-lists of contraceptives and abortifacients indiscriminately through the post. In some cases these advertisements were shown to be of a definitely misleading and fraudulent character.

PART III.—POSSIBLE REMEDIAL MEASURES.

Having reviewed the position as it exists in New Zealand, and having set out what appear to be the main causes, it now remains to consider possible preventive measures.

(1) THE RELIEF OF ECONOMIC STRESS.

In so far as hardships resulting from economic difficulties are genuine, the Committee believes that there is a real call for and that there are definite possibilities of relief by the State.

Two classes in particular call for most sympathetic consideration :—

- (1) The wives of the unemployed, or of those precariously employed.
- (2) The wives of those engaged in small farming, especially in the dairy-farming districts of the North Island.

For such women we consider that much could be done by way of financial, domestic, and obstetrical help.

Financial Help.—In general terms all efforts at social betterment—the reduction of unemployment, the improvement of wages, and relief, the reduction of taxation, direct and indirect, and the provision of better housing conditions—should undoubtedly help to make conditions more secure and more satisfactory for the rearing of larger families.

But further than this, we believe that really adequate financial assistance *directly related to the encouragement of the family* is urgently called for.

It is perfectly clear that general financial improvement does not, itself, necessarily bring about larger families; limitation of the family is probably more prevalent amongst those more fortunately placed. What form this financial aid to the family should take requires much consideration.