

As one witness stated :—

“ She should be treated with the greatest tenderness. Usually she is more sinned against than sinning ; but she carries all the blame which belongs not only to the man but also to society, which has been guilty of supine acquiescence in the surrender of standards of moral conduct.

“ She has to give birth to a child which has the rights of every unborn infant ; and she has to re-establish herself in the community . . . It is terribly difficult for them afterwards with the child, and they need all the help they can get. It seems to me that some of them must go in sheer dread to the abortionist. My definite opinion is that something more needs to be done.”

In all fairness to the many fine organizations which are helping these girls, the Committee is satisfied that there is no lack of tolerance, sympathy, and helpfulness with them.

If fault there is, it is in the attitude of the general public to this matter.

Some criticism has been directed at the St. Helens Hospitals because they are not freely open to unmarried women, but it is only right that the position should be made clear.

The actual position is that, in the majority of cases, the St. Helens Hospitals, which can only offer accommodation to an expectant mother for the period of her confinement, are *not suitable* for dealing with single women, who require protection and care before and after their confinements as well.

There are, throughout the country, many admirable institutions which are equipped to give this service.

Discussion before this Committee has, however, made it clear that where an unmarried mother can make adequate private arrangements for the care of herself and her infant after confinement, the St. Helens Hospitals are prepared to take her for the actual confinement period.

In regard to the maternity homes which deal with unmarried women, there has also been some criticism of the usual regulations in these homes which call for a period of residence in the home both before and, especially, after confinement.

It should be pointed out, however, that this is a wise and humane provision, entirely in the interests of the mothers and their babies : it ensures for the mother that very period of convalescence which other witnesses have so strongly advocated under other circumstances, it gives the baby protection in the most difficult early months, and it allows the helpers in the home an opportunity to make provision for the baby's future.

Here, again, where the mother is able to make adequate provision for herself and her infant, these regulations are certainly relaxed in some of the homes concerned, and we would commend this practice in suitable cases to those responsible for the management of all these homes.

Regarding the obstetrical care given to the unmarried mothers in these homes, the evidence given indicates clearly that it is of a standard equal to that in our other maternity hospitals.

Indeed, whereas the risks of childbirth amongst unmarried mothers the world over is notoriously high, amongst the women who place themselves in the care of these homes in New Zealand the maternal mortality and the infant mortality are both exceedingly low.

In the homes of which the members of the Committee have personal knowledge the same ante-natal care (indeed, since these patients are resident in the home and under close observation, more complete care) is given and the same methods of pain relief are used.

It is only right that these reassuring facts should be made public.

Regarding the provision for the children in these cases, while we are satisfied that the State and the various organizations responsible for their care deal with them in a kindly and sympathetic manner, we agree that every effort should be made to give them a fair prospect in life, to avoid any stigma, and to keep secret their misfortune.

It has been suggested by one witness that the privacy of an unmarried mother's affairs has been interfered with by the present regulations regarding the notification of births. Under the Child Welfare Act as it at present operates there is a duty on the Registrar to inform the Child Welfare Department of every birth, and the register is also open to the Plunket Society for purposes of following up