

cause an increase in the size of many families, for, in addition to enabling mothers to plan their families, such clinics also specialize in propaganda calculated to awaken women to an appreciation of the privileges and responsibilities of motherhood.

The Committee agrees that the possession of reliable contraceptive knowledge by the married women of New Zealand would tend to augment rather than to diminish further the natural rate of increase of our population, for an additional factor to those given above lies in the large amount of sterility which follows induced abortion—that most unsatisfactory of all forms of birth-control.

The evidence laid before the Committee shows that in New Zealand every year thousands of women imperil, and indeed negate, their future prospects of motherhood by submitting to the induction of abortion.

It has been shown that abortion is a delayed, dangerous, and unsatisfactory form of birth-control, and it can quite logically be argued that if a reliable and simple method of contraception was known to all married people the abortion problem would assume very small proportions.

This is, to a large extent, true, but it must not be forgotten that both abortion and contraception have various aspects, and that apart from other objections there are practical difficulties which are not easily surmounted. There is no known contraceptive which is simple, inexpensive, and 100 per cent. reliable for the thoughtless, the careless, and the stupid.

Contraception may be considered under three headings :—

- (1) The practice of contraception extramaritally, which only needs to be mentioned to be deprecated.
- (2) The practice of contraception by married people irrespective of all other circumstances.

Evidence was given by responsible and representative women in support of a mother's right to say when she will bear her children, and, although we agree that this privilege might well be conceded her, we are of the opinion that it is not the function of the State to undertake the dissemination of the knowledge and give the practical instruction necessary to enable the general adoption of this principle.

This general instruction can well be left to the medical profession, who should also undertake the responsibility of impressing the privileges of motherhood upon young women seeking such advice.

In recommending that such general instruction should be left to the medical practitioners, we are cognizant of the fact that many members of that profession are at a loss to know what methods of contraception can be reliably recommended to lay persons.

A sub-committee of the Obstetrical Society, consisting of members who have made a special study of this problem, has been set up, and the presentation of their report will doubtless clarify the position in the minds of the medical profession.

- (3) The practice of contraception by married women who, in the opinion of their medical attendant, should have temporary or permanent freedom from the fact or fear of pregnancy.

Not only are there cases in which severe illness exists making further pregnancies dangerous, but there is also a heterogeneous group including all gradations of health and economic reasons.

Here we have the mother with health undermined and reserve vitality reduced to a minimum by the strain of bearing and rearing a large family. She approaches the menopausal stresses with anxiety and apprehension, having done her duty to family and race, often having lived an exemplary self-sacrificing life, the intolerable contemplation of a late pregnancy drives her to desperate measures often for the first time in her life.

Again, there is the relatively young, tired, anæmic, debilitated mother, with a number of young children born at very close intervals, often denied even a half-holiday, let alone an adequate one, unable to afford suitable domestic assistance, often with poor housing or domestic arrangements, and completely exhausted with the incessant round of cleaning, cooking, and the strain of the inevitable fretfulness of a number of young children.