

The Committee is of the opinion that it is the State's duty to ensure that mothers within this group should obtain the respite that the health of themselves and their present and future families demands.

The economic aspects of these problems are dealt with in our general recommendations, but we also recommend that departments should be established, preferably in conjunction with the out-patients' departments of our public hospitals, whither medical practitioners could refer for instruction and equipment with contraceptive appliances mothers who in their opinion should be assured of temporary or permanent freedom from child-bearing.

It might be desirable that the certifying doctor's recommendation should be endorsed by the officer in charge of the department before admission, but that is a practical point which could be discussed at a later date with members of the Obstetrical Society and medical profession.

Though the Committee discounts the exaggerated statements that have been made at intervals about the sale of contraceptives to juveniles, and though no first-hand information on such matters was laid before the Committee, yet we are of the opinion that the sale of contraceptives to young persons should be prohibited.

(6) THE CONTROL OF THE ADVERTISEMENT AND SALE OF ABORTIFACIENT DRUGS AND APPLIANCES.

The Committee recommends the advertising and sale (except by doctor's prescription) of drugs euphemistically described as for the "correction of women's ailments" or "correction of irregularities" should be forbidden. For their alleged purpose of correcting functional menstrual irregularities they have no value; as abortifacients though usually ineffective their unrestricted sale should be forbidden. As stated previously, "their only value is as a lucrative source of gain to those people who, knowing their inefficiency, yet exploit the distress of certain women by selling them." An example of this exploitation was obtained by the Committee. The drugs were advertised as "corrective pills, ordinary strength, 7s. 6d.; extra strong, 12s. 6d.; special strength, 20s." A supply of the last was obtained, and analysis showed that they consisted of (1) a capsule containing about 12 drops of oil of savin, value about 6d., dangerous to health but usually useless for the purpose sold; (2) 9 tablets of quinine, worth about 1s., and quite ineffective; (3) 24 iron and aloes pills, worth about 6d., and equally ineffective. The gross profit on this 2s. worth of rubbish was at least 900 per cent. If it is possible to legislate to stop such fraudulent exploitation of people we recommend that it be done.

The Committee also recommends that the sale of surgical instruments which can be used for the purpose of procuring abortions, such as catheters, Bougies, and sea-tangle tents, be prohibited, except on the prescription of a medical practitioner, and that if possible their importation be placed under control.

PART IV.—QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE MEDICO-LEGAL ASPECTS OF ABORTION.

At the present time there is in many countries much criticism of the existing laws regarding abortion, and various suggestions have been made for the alteration of the law.

Such representations have, indeed, been made to this Committee.

A consideration of these matters, therefore, could not escape our attention.

THE NEW ZEALAND LAW REGARDING ABORTION.

The law in regard to abortion as set down in sections 221, 222, and 223 of the Crimes Act, 1908, is as follows:—

Procuring Abortion.

"221. (1) Every one is liable to imprisonment with hard labour for life who, with intent to procure the miscarriage of any woman or girl, whether with child or not, unlawfully administers to or causes to be taken by her any poison or other noxious thing, or unlawfully uses any instrument or other means whatsoever with the like intent.

"(2) The woman or girl herself is not indictable under this section."