

The Committee does not hesitate to state its first objection on moral grounds.

That the deliberate destruction of embryo human lives should be allowed for all the varying and indeterminate reasons suggested by different advocates would lead the way to intolerable license.

We would draw your attention and that of the public to the extreme views which are held by some of the most active advocates of legalized abortion.

In its most blatant form this advocacy is based on the argument of woman's right to determine for herself whether a pregnancy shall continue or not.

“The right to abortion should be taken quite away from legal technicality and legal controversy. Up to the viability of her child it is as much a woman's right as the removal of a dangerously diseased appendix.”

This is the view of Miss Stella Browne in her essay on “The Right to Abortion”^{*} and of others who hold similar opinions.

Is any comment necessary?

The representative of one of the largest women's organizations in New Zealand who gave evidence before the Committee advocated the introduction of legislation permitting abortion under certain circumstances after a woman had had two children, subsequently qualifying the suggestion by the words “if contraceptives fail.”

In the case of such ill-considered opinions, the Committee believes that it would be impossible to limit the practice if the law were in any way relaxed.

Of course there are others who confine their advocacy of legalized abortion to cases in which there are elements of real tragedy and which appeal to public sympathy, but, granting that there are many cases in which social and economic conditions create situations of great hardship, nevertheless the Committee is fairly convinced that abortion is not justifiable; the remedies lie in the removal of the causes and the alleviation of these difficult situations by social legislation and other measures, and in the education of the public conscience.

The Committee is also opposed to the legalization of abortion for social reasons on account of the very considerable risks to health which are associated with the practice.

Medical witnesses were agreed that, while the immediate risk to life in surgically performed termination of pregnancy was slight, there were very definite possibilities of more remote disabilities, and that such sequelæ occurred in a considerable proportion of cases.

In the case of a genuine therapeutic abortion these risks are outweighed by the dangers of the condition calling for the termination of pregnancy, but were the operation to be performed freely for social reasons the effect in the community might be very serious.

World-wide interest has been aroused in the matter through the experience on Soviet Russia, where, for a number of years, abortion for social and economic reasons was legalized and extensively practised.

The operations were performed in special hospitals and by skilled operators.

At first it was claimed that when the operation was done openly and carefully the risk to life was exceedingly small. It was stated, for instance, that in 1926 artificial abortion was carried out on 29,306 women in Moscow with no mortality, and that in a total of 175,000 operations in Moscow there were only nine deaths.

But now come most significant reports of the after-effects to these operations, which state that 43 per cent. of these women suffered from some definite illness as a result of the operation, and that “the most enthusiastic Russian advocates of legalized abortion are appalled at the growing evidence of serious pelvic disturbances, endocrine dysfunctions, sterility, ectopic pregnancy, and other complications following in the wake of artificial abortions.”^{*}

A recognition of these remoter dangers has undoubtedly been an important factor in bringing about the complete reversal of the previous policy in Russia, where abortion for social and economic reasons is now illegal.

^{*} “Abortion Spontaneous and Induced.” Taussig.