

III. Consideration has been given to the possible remedying of these causes.

(a) In so far as economic hardship is the primary factor, certain recommendations have been made regarding financial, domestic, and obstetrical help by the State.

(b) To lessen any fear of childbirth where this exists, it has been recommended that the public should be informed that New Zealand now has a very low death-rate in actual childbirth and that relief of pain in labour is largely used. At the same time the Committee has advocated that further efforts in the direction of pain relief should be explored.

(c) For dealing with the problem of the unmarried mother, the Committee considers that the attack must be along the lines of more careful education of the young in matters of sex, prohibition of the advertisement and sale of contraceptives to the young, and a more tolerant attitude on the part of society towards these girls and their children.

(d) The Committee believes, however, that the most important cause of all is a change in the outlook of women which expresses itself in a demand of the right to limit—or avoid—the family, coupled with a widespread half-knowledge and use of birth-control methods—often ineffective. These failing, the temptation to abortion follows.

The Committee can see only two directions in which abortion resulting from these tendencies can be controlled :—

(1) By the direction of birth-control knowledge through more responsible channels, where, while the methods would be more reliable, the responsibilities and privileges of motherhood, the advisability of self-discipline in certain directions, and other aspects of the matter would be discussed.

The Committee believes that it is through the agency of well-informed doctors, and, to a certain extent, through clinics associated with our hospitals, that this advice should be given.

It is not, however, considered that this is a matter for the State except to a limited degree.

(2) To appeal to the womanhood of New Zealand, in so far as selfish and unworthy motives have entered into our family life, to consider the grave physical and moral dangers, not to speak of the dangers of race suicide which are involved.

This, it is considered, is a matter for all women's social organizations to take up seriously.

IV. Certain further measures of a more general nature came under the examination of the Committee.

The prohibition of the promiscuous advertisement of contraceptives, and of their sale to the young; the licensing of the importation of certain types of contraceptives; the restriction of the sale or distribution of contraceptives to practising chemists, doctors, hospitals, and clinics; the prohibition of the advertisement, or of the sale, except on medical prescription, of certain drugs and appliances which might be used for abortion purposes; these measures are recommended.

The specific legalization of therapeutic abortion (by doctors for health reasons) as a safeguard to doctors was fully examined but is not recommended.

The Committee is satisfied that the present interpretation of the law is such that, where the reasons for the operation are valid, the doctor runs no risk of prosecution.

The risks of an alteration in the law are great.

Legalization of abortion for social and economic reasons was also put forward. The Committee has discussed the matter, and strongly condemns any countenancing of this measure.

Though it may be conceded that legalized performance of the operation by doctors in hospitals might reduce the incidence of surreptitious abortion and deaths from septic abortion, we do not accept this as any justification of a procedure which is associated with grave moral and physical dangers.

With regard to sterilization, the Committee adopts the same view as towards the specific legalization of therapeutic abortion.