

Recommendations.

The Committee is impressed with the valuable work in assisting the unmarried mother which is being done by the various charitable institutions visited, and recommends that every possible support and encouragement be given to this work.

Recognizing that the separation of mother and child is detrimental to the interests of both, the Committee appeals to the public at large to give every assistance to the unmarried mother who determines to keep and support her child to rehabilitate herself in the community.

14. SOCIAL ASPECTS.

A. TRANSPORT.

In urban areas difficulties of transport seldom arise, private or hired cars being easily available, and ambulance services being at hand for emergency cases. In Christchurch an excellent system of voluntary private transport has been developed in connection with St. Helens Hospital for the benefit of those patients who cannot afford taxi fares and are unable for any reason to make use of tram or bus services. A similar system would be appreciated in many other localities.

In country districts conditions vary very widely regarding transport facilities as will be seen from the section of the report regarding local conditions. An example of this variation is seen in a comparison between the districts of Hawke's Bay and Bay of Plenty. In the former district little difficulty is experienced in the matter of transport, as the majority of residents own motor-vehicles, and those who do not are for the most part able to rely on the good will of neighbours for assistance in an emergency. In the Bay of Plenty, on the other hand, transport difficulties form a serious bar to patients attending hospital or clinic, in many cases the only means of transport being a service car passing at rare intervals and often at a considerable distance from the homestead. No ambulance service is maintained by the Hospital Board.

In other districts, though transport facilities are available and the roads are good, the length of the journey which must be made in order to reach the nearest hospital involves great expense, as well as discomfort and inconvenience to patients. Such conditions are exemplified in North Westland, where residents of Karamea have to travel sixty-three miles to reach the hospital at Westport.

In the Palmerston North district difficulties of transport are to a great extent overcome by maintaining a number of district nurses provided with cars, who visit patients in outlying districts, thus obviating the necessity for frequent visits by the patients to a clinic. The Hospital Board's ambulances are at the service of patients in emergencies. This method of dealing with the transport problem is a very effective one.

Bruce Bay, in South Westland, is an example of a district which may become completely isolated during unfavourable weather, at which times the only means of transport is by air. Such conditions are rare in New Zealand.

The recommendations of the Committee regarding transport difficulties are fully set out in the section of the report which deals with local conditions. Briefly these recommendations fall into the following categories:—

- (1) Where difficulty arises from lack of transport facilities, the development of a visiting service similar to that in the Palmerston North district is advocated.
- (2) Where distance is the cause of the difficulty the erection of small local hospitals is recommended.
- (3) The establishment of waiting-homes for expectant mothers is advocated in certain localities in order to do away with any necessity for patients travelling when at or near the onset of labour.
- (4) In certain districts where communication between an outlying area and a main centre is difficult, improvement in road communication is recommended as a more economical alternative to the erection of a local hospital.

B. TELEPHONES.

The Committee found that telephonic communication throughout the country is in the main satisfactory, even the most isolated areas being reasonably well served in this respect. In some instances complaints regarding the telephone service were heard, but on investigation these proved to have but little foundation. The suggestion received in one locality that all residents of outlying areas should be supplied with telephones free of charge is a manifest impossibility, since the cost of such a service would be prohibitive and its uses very restricted.

A more genuine cause for complaint was the closing of country exchanges on Sundays and holidays, which is alleged to be a source of hardship in some instances. In most cases, however, it is possible to have the exchange opened for emergency purposes on payment of a small fee.