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the logic of why, suddenly, in one of his first public duties, Mr Malcolm chose above all the other desperate issues in health to attack those people who merely wish to have the choice of giving birth to their babies in their own homes.

Why on earth should the home birth movement be all that important? There are only 500 supervised home deliveries compared with approximately 50,000 in maternity hospitals. Was his attack then solely due to the fact that he was speaking at the Asia-Oceania Perinatal Congress — the enormous cost of which was presumably partly funded by the drug companies and the hospital equipment companies whose products the home-delivered baby has no use for? Surely that couldn't be the reason?

And Mr Malcolm's adding ability? Is he not aware yet of the cost of a maternity hospital bed, now at least \$1000 a week, compared with the cost of a home delivery, about \$200 for the same period and which would only increase fractionally even if midwives were to be given a proper wage? Has he forgotten the recent call by National Women's Hospital for a single birthing chair, at \$7000, to be incorporated into a questionable study (when international data is already available as to the importance of not restraining the delivering woman in an anti-gravity position)? The association has had a wooden birthing chair for some time. It cost \$30 and has only been used twice because at home special equipment is unnecessary.

The association fervently hopes the answers to these and other questions may be forthcoming in later utterances by our somewhat uninformed minister. In the meantime, perhaps a further point to mention, at home there is no danger from the fearful spreading infections such as the Golden Staph at present killing patients in hospitals throughout Australia. That could be said to be only one of the many reasons why birth at home is at least as safe as birth in hospital.

Come now, Mr Malcolm, learn to count a little better, do a little more homework, and don't be frightened to think for yourself. You'd then see that the home birth movement is right behind you in your struggle for better and cheaper health care.

DERYN COOPER,
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the right track

rewa Botanic Garden

Birth places

I AM sorry to discover that the new Minister of Health is not only confused but is also apparently unable to count. His early statements adopting a "roll-up-the-sleeves" and "back to basics" approach to health care were applauded by the New Zealand Home Birth Association because that is exactly what home birth is all about. It is therefore hard to understand