

NELSON HOMEBIRTH ASSOC. P.O. BOX 59. NELSON.

'THE RULES RULE O.K.'

The Homebirth Movement has reached an important cross-road. We are faced with two very distinct and mutually exclusive directions.

The first option is that our Association be dissolved as an Incorporated Society (legally known as 'winding up') and that a totally new organisation be agreed to by consensus.

The other option is to persevere with our present Constitution (let us call it 'The Rules' as the word Constitution is off-putting). This would entail maintaining policy making and the National Body (President, Secretary and Treasurer) through the process of an AGM.

There can be no compromise on this issue- we have to choose one path or the other. As hosts of ~~next~~^{this} year's Conference and wishing to avoid the confusion and disappointment of the past we want this issue resolved.

There is much to commend the first option. Obviously, we need to concentrate our meagre resources at a local level. Homebirth conditions are so variable and each branch has greatly differing needs and problems. It should not surprise us then that some branches find supporting a National Body a burden and often irrelevant to their particular concerns.

We have had great difficulty dealing with 'The Rules'. Homebirthers tend to individualists -we instinctively shy away from authoritarian rules.

But, like it or not, we have a socialised Health system, largely controlled through a central government agency. Many of the issues of most importance to us are dictated by The State. For example, Midwives' pay, direct entry of foreign Midwives, and Health Dept. regulations. Inevitably, we are drawn into the business of seeking the ear of Government as various matters arise. This must entail some kind of National representation, acting on National policy. For this to be done fairly there must be a mechanism of clearly defined rules. Ultimately, we would have to work back to a set of rules such as we already have.

It is this branch's view that 'The Rules' can fulfill our needs. We see the problems of previous AGMs resulting from the fact that 'The Rules' were not clearly presented, understood or implemented. Inevitably the result was chaos. We intend to circulate a simplified set of 'The Rules' to all participants well in advance of the AGM. In essence they are quite simple. Everybody would then be absolutely crystal clear of their rights and responsibilities. The speaking and voting rights would be enforced by an experienced chairperson. Under these circumstances the business of the Association can be concluded swiftly and fairly.

The AGM is small but vital thread that draws us together.

It is important to realize that 'The Rules' are adaptable. I quote from Rule 10 "These rules shall not be altered, added to or rescinded except by a resolution passed at an AGM by two-thirds of the members present and entitled to vote, notice of the proposed alteration having been given in the Notice of the Meeting." In other words 'The Rules' can be shaped to our particular needs providing it is done in the

Prescribed manner.

N.B. This process has already begun, with several improvements made at the last AGM.

There is much of value in some of 'The Rules'. For example, the stipulation that the business of the Meeting be sent out with the Notice of the Meeting means that re-mits should be well discussed and thought out at the branch level before the vote is taken.

The 'faciliated consensus' idea may be fine for an 'ideas' session but is not, in our view a suitable means for clear-cut decision making. To get the most out of those few hours together commonly shared rules are necessary. This is where we have come unstuck in the past.

We feel it would be premature to ditch 'The Rules' as they have yet to be properly implemented.

IN CONCLUSION: The present position is unsustainable. Either we go right back to the melting pot or use 'The Rules' in the way they were intended.

We have made our position clear. Which path do you choose?

We view this development as nothing more than the growing pains of a young and vigorous organisation.

Whatever the outcome we will be doing our best to provide for a damn good Conference next May. In whatever form we take we must be 100% together in the cause of Home-birth. We must never lose sight of that.

Please advise of your branch's stand on this issue by the 25th of Feb, 1985.

N.H. COSTLEY. (SECRETARY NELSON BRANCH.)

Dear Auckland,

Well done with the National Newsletter
It was first class. Could the Nelson Branch
have 6 copies in further instead of
the usual 3.

Yours Nigel.

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