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Paeroa.
24/8/87

Dear Homebirth supporter.

Yet again we are lobbying the Thames Obstetric Review Committee and the Health Dept. re the interference & harassment of G.P.'s, midwife and homebirth parents.

Enclosed is a copy of Janet Taylor's account of the circumstances surrounding her birth experience late in May.

This was a responsible homebirth that met with Health Department approval but was subjected to unreasonable harassment from the Thames Obstetrician.

On the previous occasion that I asked for national support we received "voluminous correspondence" and the result was the Obstetric Review Committee acknowledging the place of homebirth so this form of lobbying is effective in our area.

Could we please ask for further support. We would like people to write from the position of birthing at home under the stress that Janet experienced and expressing concern at the actions taken by the Thames Obstetrician. Could one copy of the letter be sent to the Obstetric Review Committee, Thames Hospital and another copy to Jerry Nichol, PO Box 5013, Division of Family Child Health, Dept of Health Wellington.

Thankyou in anticipation of your support
Regards GAY VE.

70

I am writing about the difficulty I had in obtaining a homebirth in the Thames Hospital Board area because of the local obstetrician.

Firstly, my usual G.P. in Waihi was not prepared to attend our homebirth, because of threats from the Thames obstetrician, namely, that the G.P. would not be allowed to practise obstetrics in the area if he did attend homebirths. We had a good relationship with our G.P. over many years and he had delivered our last baby. I did not feel like starting with a new G.P. while pregnant, and having to establish a new relationship during this time. My family were all familiar with our G.P., and we all felt comfortable with him. Brian especially wanted the G.P. he knew, not a stranger, coming to our birth. My original midwife cancelled for various reasons and lack of a G.P. was one of them. I had a terrible struggle obtaining a midwife, phoning numerous Auckland and Hamilton midwives. I felt that I needed a G.P. to attend my birth as my midwife needed local support, as she was travelling some distance. I found an out of town G.P. who would attend, citing his reasons as he would attend because the Waihi G.P.'s. would not and he felt any G.P. would be better than none. He felt we were only getting second best, as he was not obstetrically diploma-ed. He notified Thames Hospital that he would be attending a homebirth in their area and he received a letter from the Thames Obstetrician. My G.P. was now faced with the threat of going before the Medical Disciplinary Review Committee if our birth had any problems. The letter also stated that my G.P. should not attend when there were better qualified G.P.'s. in Waihi. This was ironical as they were also under threat not to attend.

From then on, my G.P. felt inadequate and pressured; he did not withdraw his support, but he asked me to keep trying the Waihi G.P. I felt that the Thames Obstetrician was making my birth more unsafe than it needed to be by influencing the G.P.'s. I had not booked into Waihi Hospital as a back-up but chose Tauranga as my next stop if needed. When I went to book into Tauranga, the staff, including two Obstetricians, discussed my homebirth and were very positive and supportive. My good health and previous obstetrical history made me a good candidate for a homebirth.

My midwife felt enormous pressure to perform well because we were under surveillance by the Thames Obstetrician. She had not travelled out of the area before and felt nervous about coming to the notorious Thames Hospital area. She just wanted to get the birth over and done with. The effects of this pressure meant she had sleepless nights worrying and became short-tempered with her family. She made several visits to me from Auckland also visited the G.P., so they felt confident in each other and checked their mutual equipment for any eventuality at my birth.

In early May, the Thames Obstetrician phoned my G.P. to see if he had attended the homebirth. He had not. The G.P. was told that the midwife was travelling out of zone illegally. He also phoned the Manukau Medical Officer of Health and told him that the midwife was travelling out of zone illegally. The M.O.H. phoned the midwife as her superior and advised her not to attend. She had already applied for permission from the Hamilton Health Department, which was granted. She felt that she was being treated unfairly as she was fully qualified and registered as a Domicillary Midwife and she had gone to considerable expense to set herself up with all the necessary equipment. She was a professional carrying out a responsible action attending my homebirth in a very organised and expert manner.

With both my midwife and G.P. under tremendous pressure, a terrific onus was on me to have a normal birth for their sakes or their professions were at risk. Not a day went by that I did not worry about the birth, even

though I had had two previous normal deliveries. I felt that I had lost my right to a private birth because of the actions of the Obstetrician. I am writing about the effects of these actions because I would not like any other women to go through the struggle I had to obtain a homebirth. It is not a good position to be in while pregnant, having a lot of worry and stress. Instead of enjoying my pregnancy, I felt a lot of tension which carried on after the birth when I just gave up coping and trying to be strong.

My homebirth did go well and was a very happy occasion for my family and me, but it was the G.P. who used the phone first to tell his wife it went well and the midwife's husband phoned up to see if it went well.

More people than I can mention were waiting anxiously to see that my birth went well, all because of the actions of one man.