

The Timaru Herald

FRIDAY 8 APRIL 1988

Letters to the Editor

'Spirit of Gisborne and East Coast'

Sir, — The spirit of Gisborne, and of the entire Eastland region, is warmed by the generous support and sympathy we are receiving from people, communities and organisations throughout New Zealand.

Contributions to the Gisborne-East Coast-Wairoa Mayors' Relief Fund continue to flow in, and we have put into place an organisation to ensure that every cent will be spent wisely.

The devastation of Cyclone Bola on our farming land has been severe and we have entered a major recovery phase. It will be a massive task restoring communications for isolated farming families, rebuilding rural roads and bridges, and bringing silt-damaged land back into production.

However, it is important to realise that Gisborne City, which escaped all but minor flood damage, is up-and-running. All our commercial and tourism facilities are operating normally. Our main roads are open.

A major disappointment for us at Easter was the number of people who cancelled holiday visits to our city, apparently in the mistaken belief that our tourist services were impaired. Not so. We are as ready as ever to welcome you and your families, and we would appreciate your business.

Hink Healey
Mayor of Gisborne

'Birth issue not a mockery'

Sir, — I feel very angry and also very sad that the request for support people to be able to be present at births at the Jean Todd Obstetric Unit has been turned into such a mockery.

The birth of a child is an amazingly special event, and if a woman chooses to have another support person present during this time, it is because she and her husband/partner feel it will help that birth experience to be a more fulfilling one.

They know that they will receive assistance from that person, whether it be physical or emotional. They also know that the person is not there to view the birth, spectate, hinder professional staff, or bring a chilly bin with them so celebrations can start immediately. If Alan Robert (31 March) and Derek Burrows (Midweek column, 6 April) had experienced the warm and close atmosphere present at such a birth they would not be writing such childish and demeaning comments.

Please remember exactly what is being requested — that other people (and/or her supervised children) as well as a woman's partner be allowed to be present during labour and birth at the Jean Todd Obstetric Unit if the woman has her doctor's agreement.

It is important that the South Canterbury Hospital Board gives the women who choose such an option the right to do so. Greymouth, Nelson, Christchurch Women's, Oamaru, Queen Mary and Ashburton maternity hospitals all allow this option.

Sue Teale
Timaru

'A woman's choice'

Sir, — I practise as a midwife in Nelson, attending home births. On holiday in Timaru this week, I read with interest the article in the Herald "The blues of birth..." by Derek Burrows.

For 10 years I have attended births in the situation where women and their partners choose who they have with them at the birth of their baby. Some choose no one other than themselves; others choose their children or their parents or their own siblings or close friends — in fact, the people they wish to share the birth with and those who will be supportive to them.

The birth of a baby belongs to the people who are having the baby and more specifically to the woman who is giving birth. It is not the place of anyone else — doctors, midwives, hospital boards or Derek Burrowses — to tell her who she can or cannot have with her when she gives birth.

Women best give birth when they feel comfortable and supported, when they trust those in attendance around them. When a woman chooses to have others with her to share in her experience, it can only be to everyone's advantage.

Bronwen Pelvin
Nelson

'Create work, don't cut dole'

Sir, — It is rather disturbing to learn that the Minister of Employment, Mr Goff, is considering following the examples of Sweden and Britain by cutting the dole to 16 and 17-year-olds and sending them back to school for further training.

I feel Mr Goff must be ignorant about the real situation in New Zealand. Are we Swedish or British? No, we are New Zealanders, quite capable of running our own affairs.

It is because of meddling by his Government in the last three